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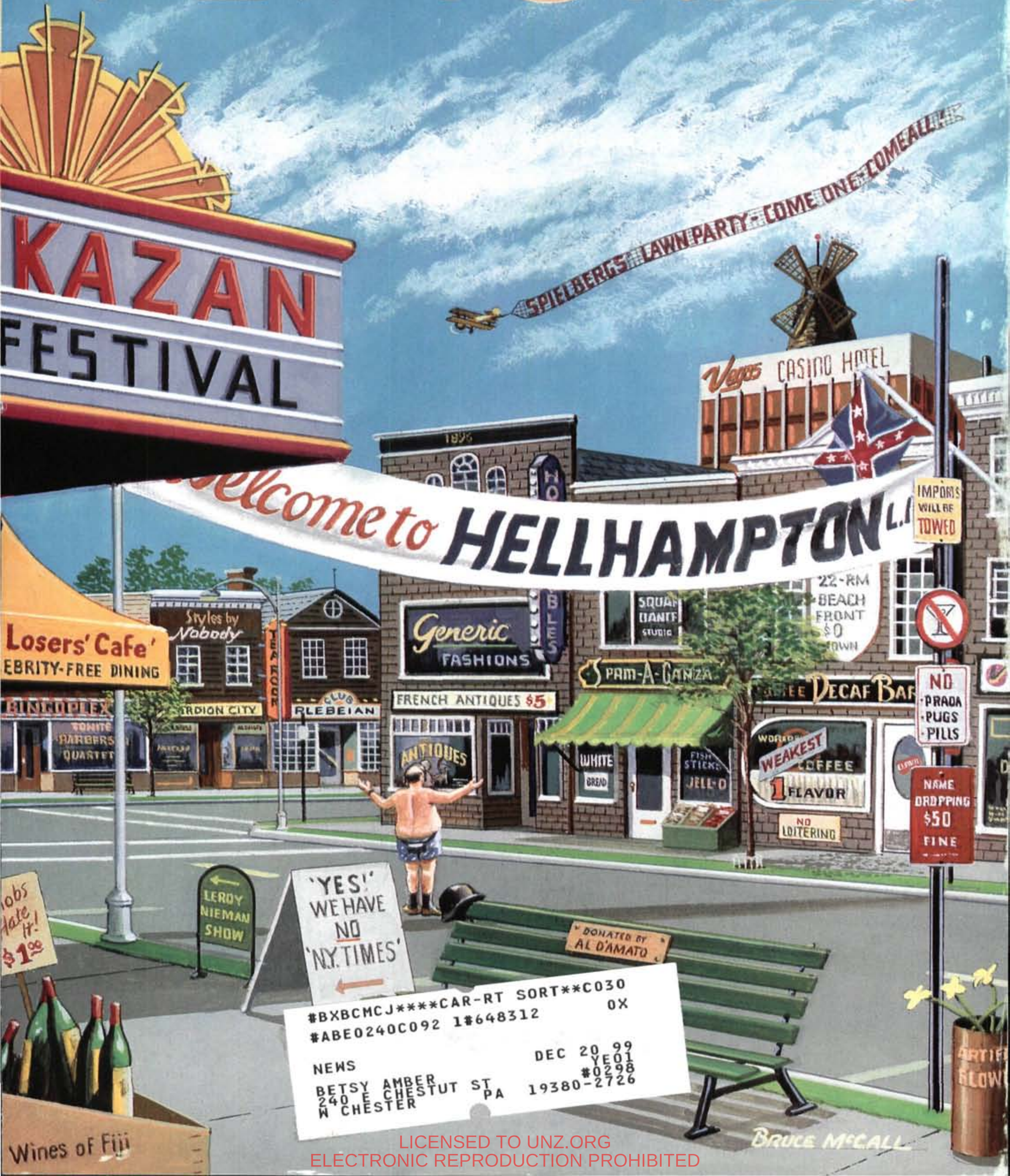
Sept. 6, 1999



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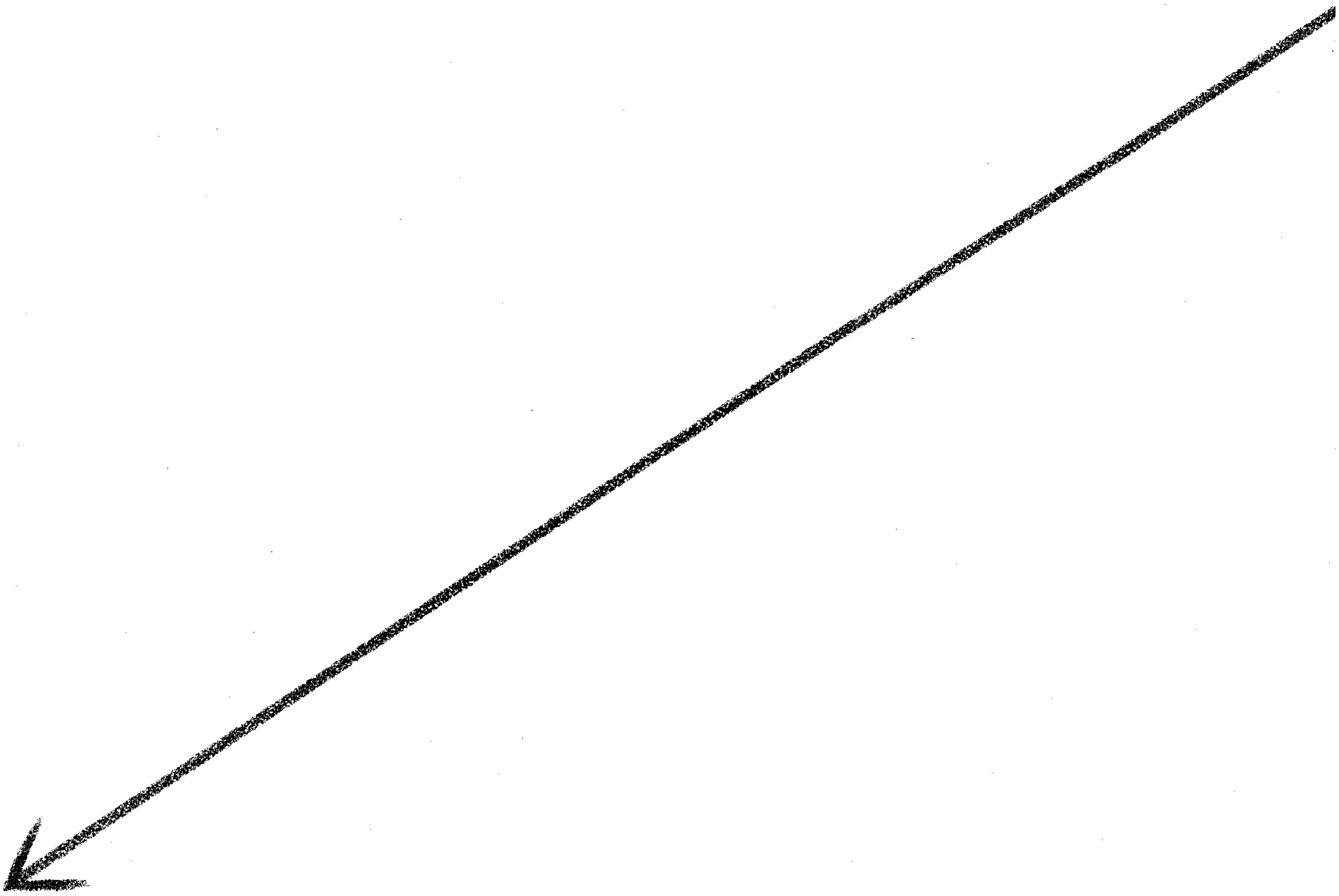

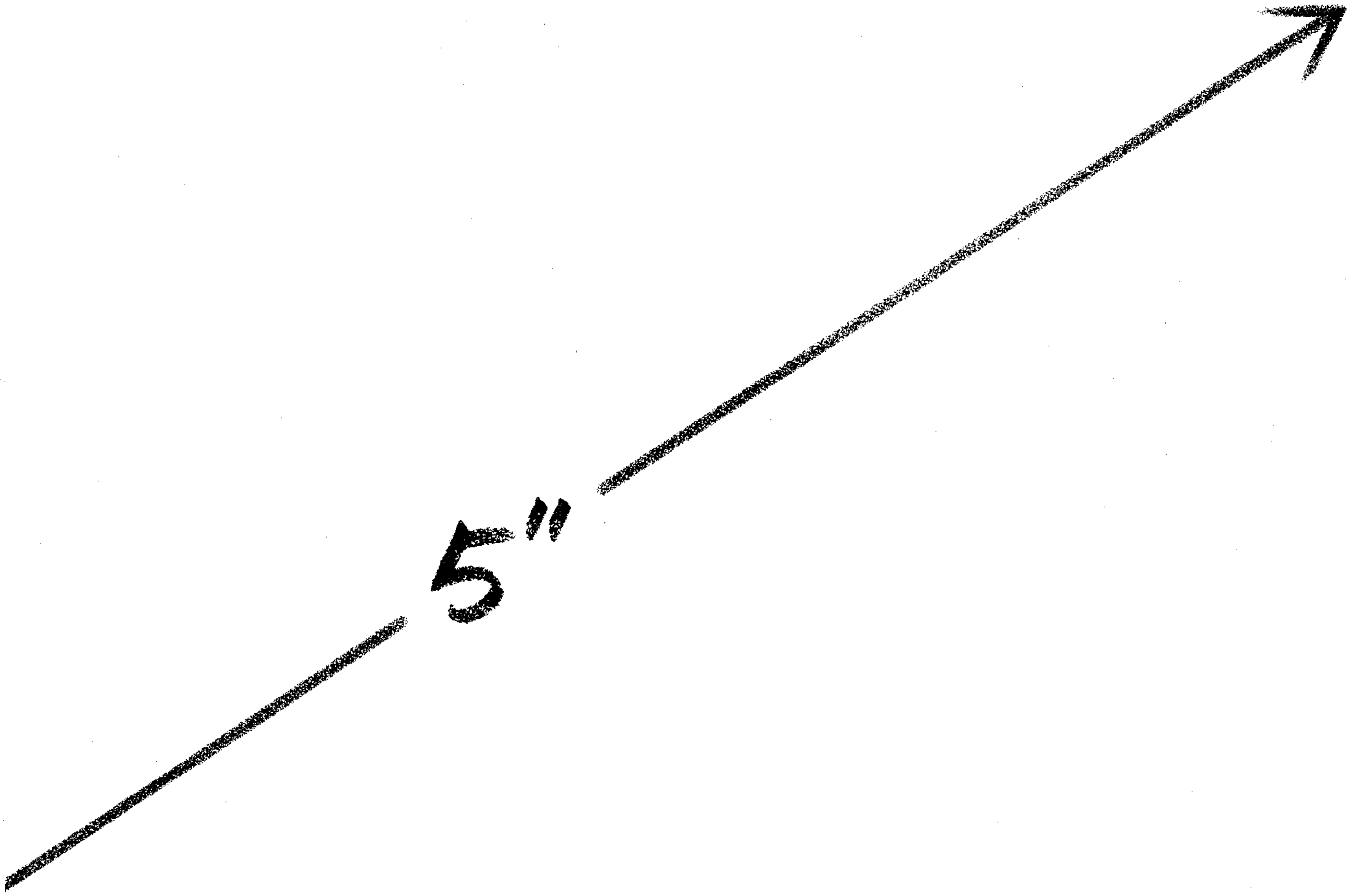

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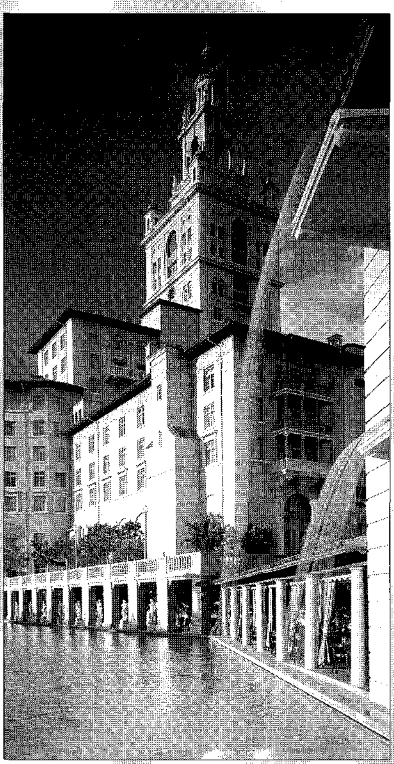

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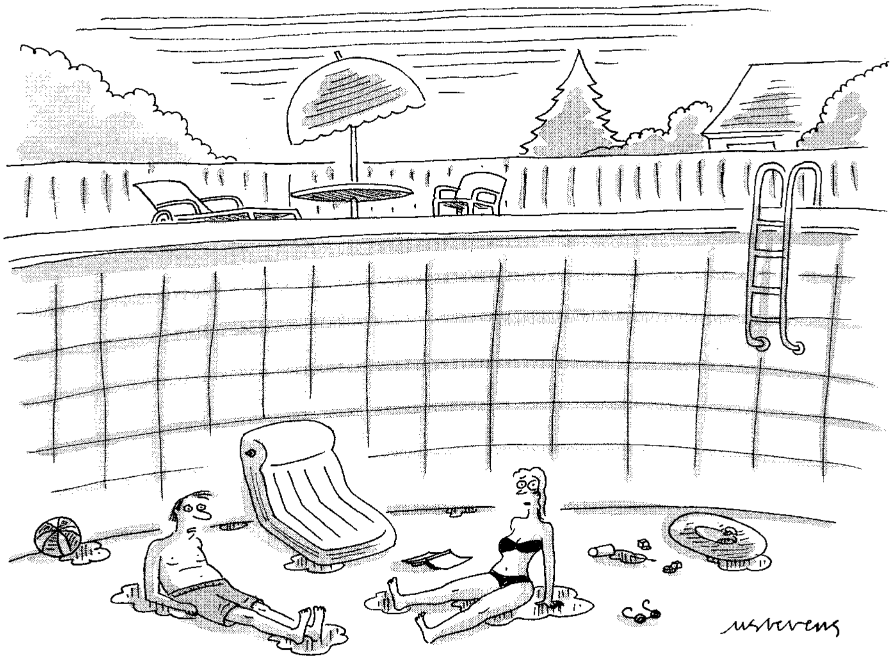

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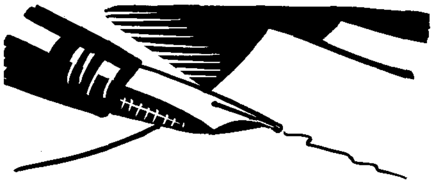

PLANNED PARENTHOOD

One would think that any woman who had S.A.T. scores of 1400 or more would also have the intellectual ability to deduce that selling her genetic material to a high bidder is wrong. After reading Rebecca Mead's article on the egg-donation industry, "Eggs for Sale" (August 9th), I've concluded that sound moral reasoning isn't necessarily linked to intelligence. Having given up my own child to an open adoption, and seeing the dark side of the adoption industry firsthand, I am no longer saddened by infertile couples. They anger me, especially those who think they have a God-given right to a child, no matter how that child is procured. When will women realize that, just as we oppose selling babies, we should oppose selling our very eggs? Such "donations" are still trafficking in human lives.

HEATHER LOWE
Summerville, S.C.

"Eggs for Sale" was unfair to the infertile. Not every woman who uses donor eggs is a spoiled, over-the-hill rich bitch searching for her genetic clone. Some women, like me, suffered terribly before arriving at that option. My ovaries were removed when I was thirty-three, because of surgical incompetence. The two paths I could take to motherhood were donor eggs and adoption. In my part of the world, the wait for a healthy infant or toddler is two to three years, and the cost of adoption is more than thirty thousand dollars—and that's if the birth mother chooses you. Egg donation offers a fabulous alternative. It allowed my husband to be our babies' genetic father, and it cost a grand total of eleven thousand dollars, including a donor fee of eighteen hundred dollars. I became pregnant, I carried my babies, and it is my name on their birth certificates. I never even saw a picture of my donor—only a family history—and I am eternally grateful to her.

MARY MORITZ FUSILLO
Houston, Tex.

Rebecca Mead discusses how prospective parents specify the requirements they desire in their egg donors, and, as a result, they are encouraged to view the egg as a product. It's worth wondering if they will view the resulting child as any less of a "product." One doctor posed the question "Do you really want to bring up a little girl whose biological mother was someone who decided to charge ten thousand dollars for eggs?" I would ask whether a child would want to be brought up by parents who had paid such significant amounts of money to insure that their expectations of physical characteristics, academic potential, etc. are met. If the son of a football player just isn't interested in sports, how flexible is Dad likely to be with his investment?

PAULINE MONSON
Birchrunville, Pa.

THE RUSSIAN MEDIA

Michael Ignatieff, in his piece "The Virtual Commander" (August 2nd), writes that the democratic Russia hoped for by the West would have actively supported the Serbs in Kosovo. He believes that Russia did not do so thanks to an autocratic Yeltsin regime that could "ignore popular feeling in favor of Serbia." I do not see the irony here. If Russia were a true democracy, it would have a pluralistic independent media serving to inform its citizens of all aspects of the Kosovo conflict. However, the most popular Russian TV channels and newspapers hardly ever mentioned the plight of the Kosovars. The Russian public was seriously misinformed about who the real victims were, and it was this lack of objective information, not the mythic "Slavic brotherhood," that accounted for the Russian people's almost unanimous support for the Serbian cause.

ALEC BATCHAN
New York City

EDITORS' NOTE: The answers to the last 8 x 10 Cryptic, No. 101, can be found on page 35.

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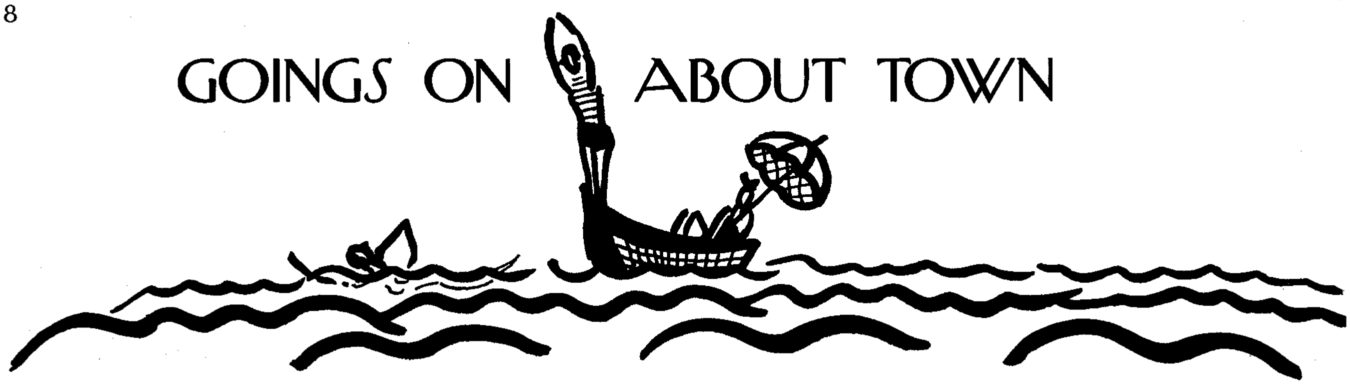

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OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Epic Proportions—Kristin Chenoweth heads the cast of a new comedy by Larry Coen and David Crane, set in the thirties in the Arizona desert, during the filming of a Hollywood Biblical epic. Jerry Zaks is the director. Previews begin Sept. 7. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

A Streetcar Named Desire—Elizabeth Marvel portrays Blanche DuBois, in Ivo van Hove's staging of Tennessee Williams's play. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

The Winds of God—Two contemporary Tokyo comedians killed in a motorcycle wreck are reincarnated as Second World War kamikaze pilots, in a comedy by Masayki Imai, who co-stars. Previews begin Sept. 7. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Chicago City Limits—The improv company presents a new revue, "Y2K, You're O.K." (Chicago City Limits Theatre, First Ave. at 61st St. 888-5233.)

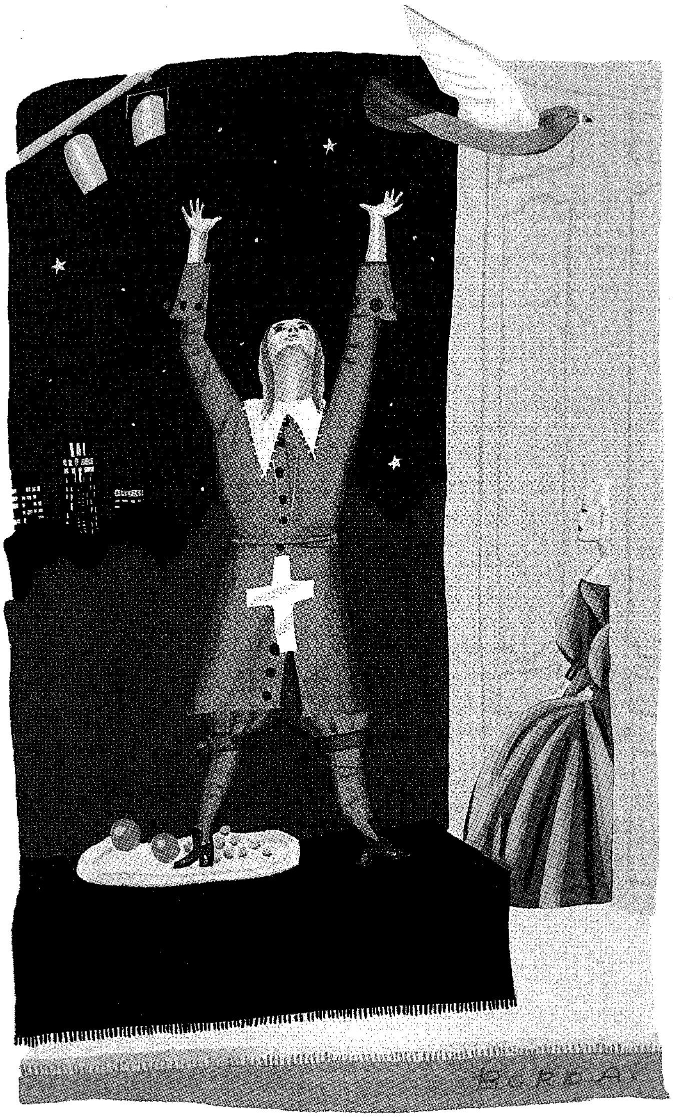
The Countess—A drama by Gregory Murphy, about the tangled relationship between the nineteenth-century art critic John Ruskin, his wife, and Ruskin's protégé John Everett Millais. (Samuel Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 594-2826.)

Dear Liar—Marian Seldes and Donal Donnelly portray Mrs. Patrick Campbell and George Bernard Shaw, in a drama that Jerome Kilty based on letters written during the forty-year clandestine love affair between the actress and the playwright. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

Eugene O'Neill Festival—The second season in a five-year undertaking of O'Neill's œuvre by Playwrights Theatre. Sept. 2 and Sept. 7 at 8:30: "The Personal Equation." Continues through Sept. 12. (Provincetown Playhouse, 133 Macdougal St. For information about tickets, call 998-5801.)

The Gathering—A Shabbat dinner set during the spring of Reagan's controversial visit to Bitburg (the German cemetery where, it is believed, Nazi soldiers are buried) turns into political crossfire between a Dachau survivor (Ben Hammer) and his son (Robert Fass), who is a speechwriter for the President. It could have been a sombre, if not overly burdened, affair, were it not for the comic tone of the tightly scripted first act. The mood slows to a more ponderous pace in the second. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 239-6200.)

Hazelle: To the Top, Top, Top!—In her one-woman comedy, set in a New York City neighborhood, Hazelle Goodman portrays a number of characters looking for ways to fulfill their dreams. Sept. 1-2 at 8:30. (Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. 539-8770.)



Dylan Baker, in Molière's "Tartuffe," at the Delacorte Theatre.

JULIETTE BORDA

If Love Were All—Twiggy and Harry Groener star as Gertrude Lawrence and Noël Coward, in this appealing revue-cum-reminiscence by Sheridan Morley; the pair sing some twenty Coward songs and portray, with sweetness and without sentimentality, the remarkable lifelong friendship between the two, who met when Noël was twelve and Gertie fourteen. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

I'm the One That I Want—The comedian Margaret Cho tells the story of her disastrous descent into Hollywood, as the first Asian-American to have her own sitcom. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 307-4100. Closes Sept. 4.)

It Ain't Nothin' But the Blues—A marvellous collection of songs performed by a dynamic cast. The music alone could have showcased the influence of the blues, but instead the audience is subjected to explanatory notes and bad-talk-show banter. Fortunately, the blues triumphantly survives even this. The show reopens at the Ambassador on Sept. 9. (219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

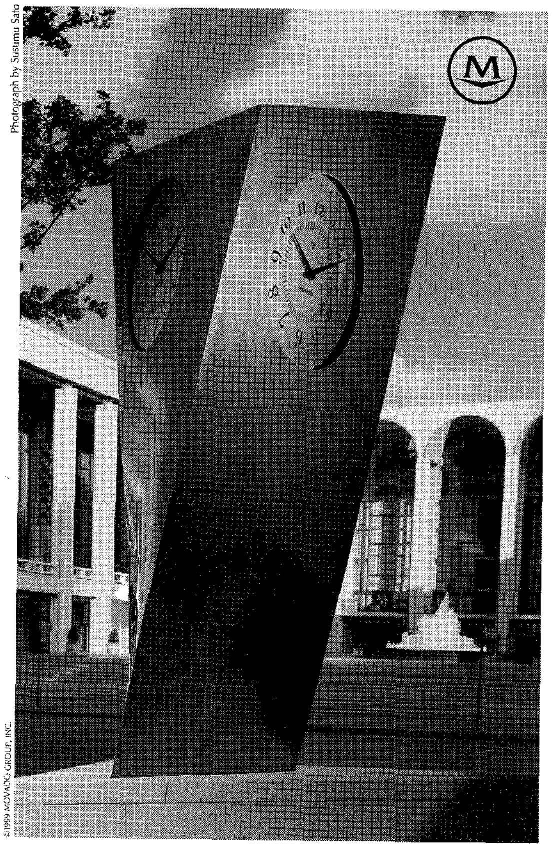
It's My Party (and I'll Die If I Want To)—F. Murray Abraham leads a cast that includes Joyce Van Patten and Adam Grupper, in a family comedy by Elizabeth Coleman. (ArcLight, 152 W. 71st St. 307-4100. Closes Sept. 19.)

Jar the Floor—The plot of Cheryl L. West's new play tends toward melodrama and predictability, but it doesn't matter—the core of the show is strong, funny character studies of five women (four generations of a black family and a friend) played by five powerhouse actresses. There's a lesson about dysfunctional families, but also a fine, humorous, and heartwarming evocation of strength and love. Irma P. Hall, as the matriarch, is particularly memorable; the evening is cleanly directed by Marion McClinton. It all takes place in Second Stage's new home, a bank that has been converted into a funky yet gracious theatre space. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422. Closes Sept. 12.)

Jean Cocteau Repertory—The company opens its season with Tom Stoppard's 1981 comedy "On the Razzle," directed by Scott Shattuck. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

Kat and the Kings—A rock-and-roll musical by Taliep Petersen and David Kramer, set in Cape Town in 1957, about a doo-wop group trying to make it big. Mr. Kramer is the director. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Live Sax Acts—David Dorfman and Dan Froot perform a play they co-wrote investigating the complexities



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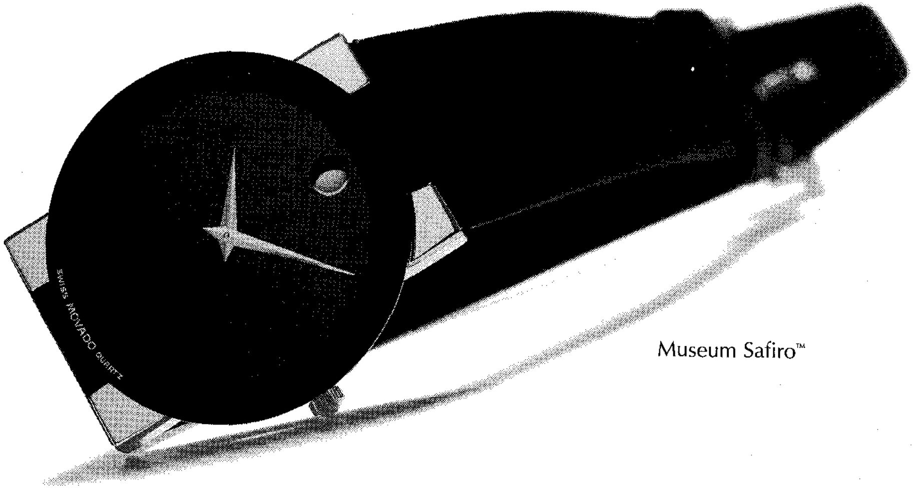

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of male friendship and romance. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077.)

Measure for Measure—The third summer offering of Shakespeare in the Park(ing Lot), from Expanded Arts. (Municipal Parking Lot at Broome and Ludlow Sts. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 253-1813.)

Summer '69—The musical revue tracing a group of music fans' trip to the original Woodstock has reopened at a new theatre. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Tartuffe—Mark Brokaw directs Dylan Baker, Dana Ivey, J. Smith-Cameron, Charles Kimbrough, Wendell Pierce, and Mary Testa in Molière's comedy, New York Shakespeare Festival's second outdoor production of the season. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 539-8750. Closes Sept. 5.)

Things You Shouldn't Say Past Midnight—Peter Ackerman's screwball bedroom comedy consists mainly of a sublimely ridiculous conference call involving three pairs of lovers. The questions about sex and the proper balance between intellectual and physical attraction have no answers, but Ackerman has some interesting suggestions, and, to his credit, comedy outweighs the theorizing. John Rando, the director, has a good eye, and the show comes off beautifully. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Thwak—Comic acrobatics (both physical and vocal) from the Australian performers David Collins and Shane Dundas, a.k.a. the Umbilical Brothers. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

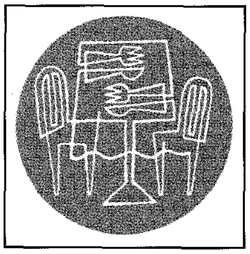
Voices in the Dark—In this age of computer-generated gore, the actress Judith Ivey, playwright John Pielmeier ("Agnes of God"), and director Christopher Ashley have achieved the impossible, a truly thrilling stage thriller. It's a classic plot: Ivey plays a radio-talk-show host who gets a call from a wacko, then heads off to an isolated cabin for a peaceful weekend—oops! Ivey and the writing are smart and funny, and the scares, when they come, are both unanticipated and really scary; the plot includes some nice twists, and the supporting cast carry the whole thing off with style. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

The Weir—Conor McPherson's play takes place in the musty chill of a backwater Irish pub, where a handful of habitués chew the cud of their solitude, spinning ghostly yarns. It has a bittersweet charm, but for all the well-crafted talk and the well-observed bonhomie, it is finally a shaggy-bog story. (4/12/99) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN: Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CABARET:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **DEATH OF A SALESMAN:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **DE LA GUARDA:** Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FOOTLOOSE:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **FOSSE:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH:** Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE-NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RAGTIME:** Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Ibis, 327 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **SIDE MAN:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **WIT:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.

TABLES FOR TWO



Il Vagabondo, 351 E. 62nd St. (832-9221)—Something of the Italian social club clings to this nostalgic trattoria, New York's only bocce restaurant, since 1965. (Its competition, Felons, in Little Italy, closed in the sixties.) The entrance-area bar is sleek, but just steps beyond is the old-fashioned Bocce Room: stamped-tin ceiling, paper placemats, and a bocce court taking up space that in any other Upper East Side restaurant would long since have been given over to tables.

The rules are prominently posted: "No Gambling Permitted. Children Not Allowed on Court. Use of Court Allowed Only Before Being Seated or After Leaving Table, Not While Occupying Table." Bocce, it seems, is too serious to play while eating. For atmosphere, the court walls are hung with some ancient equipment: a roller and something that resembles a huge squeegee (for levelling the court). If you're afraid of turning your back on someone who's lobbing a heavy wooden ball geezer style, you can forgo a courtside table and eat in one of two checkered-tablecloth dining rooms, which continue the theme with huge doctored photographs of well-known athletes variously swatting, batting, dunking—what else?—a bocce ball, and of beloved customers, not all of them celebrities. ("Nobody can cover the court like Edith and Milton Burns, who have carpeted New York City's biggest and best residential and commercial properties.")

The menu, which is the size of a dance card, offers the sort of appetizers (mozzarella and tomatoes with basil, caponata), entrées (a nice slab of swordfish, huge portions of eggplant parmigiana), and pasta dishes which constituted "Italian" before New Yorkers ever heard the word "risotto." For dessert, all the usual creamy sweets—tiramisu, spumoni, tortoni—are available, as well as "bocce-ball tartufo." The short but varied wine list has a Brunello and a very decent half-bottle of Chianti, and the beer list includes Peroni (perfect for bocce). Don't expect a little bowl of extra-virgin olive oil to dip your bread in—it's not that kind of place. But the bocce is free. (Open weekdays for lunch and dinner; weekends for dinner only. Entrées $13.50-$24.)

DANCE

Dance Theatre Workshop—Aug. 31-Sept. 1 at 8: Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance Group in "Qoqoda" (Ndebele for "Knocking"). (Through Sept. 19.) . . . ¶ Sept. 2-5 at 6: Patricia Fox and Tal Yarden in "Corpus Exquisitus," at D.T.W.'s street-level garage. . . . ¶ Sept. 2-3 at 8: David Dorfman and Dan Froot in "Live Sax Acts." (Through Sept. 12.) . . . ¶ Sept. 4 at 8 and Sept. 5 at 3: Molly Hickok in "Mary Chestnut's Bone Case" and Paule Turner Duchess in "She's Out of Her Tree." . . . ¶ Sept. 7-8 at 8: Gabri Christa and Cynthia Oliver in "Lukosimad." (Through Sept. 26.) (219 W. 19th St. 924-0077.)

Pilar Rioja—The marquesa of Spanish dance offers a valuable lesson in the regional variations of the form. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. Sept. 3 at 8, Sept. 4 at 3, Sept. 5 at 7, and Sept. 6 at 6. Through Sept. 26.)

Lonné Moretton Dance Group—The eleven-member company premières "E. E. Cummings Songcycle," a series of ten poems set to music by Ellen Mandel. (Soundance Studio, 385 Broadway. 941-6457. Sept. 3 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

Megadeth—The lite-metal gods, led by guitar hero Dave Mustaine, continue to explain life to angst-ridden boys. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Sept. 1 at 6.)

Alanis Morissette and Tori Amos—In what may be the most fearsome female pairing since Thelma met Louise, the Canadian fury turned movie star (she plays God herself in Kevin Smith's upcoming "Dogma") splits a bill with the preacher's daughter turned piano-pounding dynamo. (Jones Beach Theatre. 516-221-1000. Sept. 1 at 7:30.)

"Keep Bangin'"—"Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk" may have closed, but the beat goes on. Raymond King, Darrell Dove, Jr., and Larry Wright, the musicians who created the onstage percussion for the Broadway show, bang away on pots and pans, plastic buckets, drums, and other props. The sticks fly. Sweat drenches their shirts. Just a few feet from the flurry, you watch, mesmerized. Directed by Savion Glover. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8; Saturdays at 6 and 9; Sundays at 3 and 7. (Players Theatre, 115 Macdougal St. 239-6200.)

Gipsy Kings—Talent runs in the family of this seven-man band, all of whose members—authentic Gypsies from France—are related. Led by the plangent vocals of Nicolas Reyes and the rollicking guitar of Tonino Baliardo, the band that gave the world "Bamboleo" has dominated the world-music charts for the better part of this decade. (Theatre at Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Sept. 1-2 at 8.)

Jethro Tull—Having overcome such pop-music indignities as baldness and winning a Grammy for heavy metal, the members of Tull now look to the future. The group's latest album has the forward-thinking title "J-Tull Dot Com." With Ten Years After. (Jones Beach Theatre. Sept. 2 at 8.)

"Warm Up 2"—The final afternoon of avant-garde music on the grounds of the P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center features the sonic experimentalism of Soundlab and the rootsy blues of Elliot Sharp's Terraplane. Sharp, who's usually heard producing unearthly sounds on a Frankensteinian instrument from which coat hangers and other metallic objects protrude, also happens to be a monster blues guitarist. (22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City. 718-784-2084. Sept. 4 at 4.)

R.E.M.—America's preëminent garage band, a few years older and perhaps a little too preoccupied with Athens, Georgia, politics and financing independent films, continues to jangle away. With the retro Brit-pop chic of Spacehog. (Jones Beach Theatre. Sept. 4 at 8.)

THE MOODY BLUES—Playing "Nights in White Satin" and other bloated classics, with the requisite orchestral accompaniment provided by the Long Island Philharmonic. (Jones Beach Theatre. Sept. 5 at 8.)

CLUBS

(*Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.*)

ARLENE GROCERY, 95 Stanton St., between Ludlow and Orchard Sts. (358-1633)—A narrow, dimly lit renovated bodega that's the ideal environment for three to five unknown bands a night struggling their way out of obscurity.

LE BATEAU IVRE, 230 E. 51st St. (583-0579)—"One must be a *seer*," wrote Arthur Rimbaud. And on a late-summer evening the sidewalk tables at this inspired bistro are an ideal spot to follow his advice: "The poet makes himself a seer by an immense, long, deliberate derangement of all the senses." An attractive crowd gathers as the light fades, choosing from a wine list that offers more than a hundred varieties by the glass and another hundred and fifty by the bottle. Divination awaits you like the summer dawn.

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Sept. 1: The complicated and accomplished British songwriter KEVIN COYNE has more than thirty albums to his name, but since he's spent the last fourteen years camped out in Germany he's not well known here. / The idea of reinterpreting American folk tunes through contemporary beats and electronic instrumentation sounds about as necessary as attaching a motor to a farm horse, but when you hear SNAKEFARM'S début album, "Songs from My Funeral," you may appreciate the uses of sonic reëngineering. Guitarist and arranger Michel Delory and singer Anna Domino have turned such classics as "St. James Infirmary," "House of the Rising Sun," and "Frankie and Johnny" into nothing short of new songs.

BOWERY BALLROOM, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Sept. 2: The Scottish feedback band MOGWAI.

CHEZ ES SAADA, 42 E. 1st St. (777-5617)—On the ground floor of the old technical school here is a pretty café; traipse through and you reach the top of an improbably grand tiled staircase; descend and you find a basement transformed by scattered rose petals and golden light into the secret Tangier of Burroughs and Bowles. Waitresses in gold Badgley Mischka uniforms serve North African-flavored bistro fare throughout, and d.j.s play everything from nineteen-fifties Egyptian 45s to up-to-the-minute Moroccan *chaiba* dance music. But the greatest pleasure is the elegant "retiring room," where you can slouch on a hassock and sip a vintage cocktail.

FEZ, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Sept. 7: NONA HENDRYX'S name should be on any list of the great singer-songwriters. As a member of the seventies trio Labelle, she wrote the bulk of the group's material, which was edgy, provocative, political, and full of double entendres and empowering messages. Her solo efforts since Labelle's breakup, in 1976, have been equally challenging, from heavy metal ("Nona Hendryx," 1977) to New Age ("Skin Diver," 1989), with some fruitful collaborations (with Material, Arthur Baker, and Talking Heads) sandwiched in between. Live, she's regal, buff, and ready to bare her psyche. The MINGUS BIG BAND still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IRVING PLAZA, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Sept. 2-3: MASTER MUSICIANS OF JAJOUKA, the legendary Moroccan ensemble best known for its 1968 dalliance with the late Rolling Stones guitarist, Brian Jones, who released a recording called "Brian Jones Presents the Pipes of Pan at Jajouka" (long hard to find but recently reissued by Philip Glass's Point Music label). Jones's prescient take on the group's trance-inducing drones paved the way for other world-music imports. Sept. 4-6: The sharp-witted rap duo BLACK STAR (Mos Def and Talib Kweli) follows in the literate tradition of such acts as De la Soul and A Tribe Called Quest. During this three-night stand, the pair trades rhymes for the benefit of Nkiru Books, a store in their home borough of Brooklyn.

Kool Keith, the Black Elvis, at Wetlands.

MARK ZINGARELLI

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—Sept. 3: SUPERSUCKERS, led by Eddie Spaghetti, THE HELLACOPTERS, a souped-up ensemble from Sweden, and ZEN GUERRILLA, a hard-rocking outfit from San Francisco, team up for a night of good old-fashioned rock and roll, replete with screaming guitars, screaming vocalists, heavy mascara, and flying manes of hair. Sept. 5: MOGWAI (see the Bowery Ballroom).

RODEO BAR, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—The walls simulate a log cabin, a buffalo head blows smoke through its nostrils, a horse trailer has been converted into a bar. It's just about the best free house in town. Sept. 6-8: THE HOT CLUB OF COWTOWN, a string trio specializing in Texas swing.

S.O.B.'S, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Sept. 6: JOSÉ (EL CANARIO) ALBERTO, the Crown Prince of salsa. Dining.

SWINE ON NINE SALOON, 693 Ninth Ave., at 48th St. (397-8356)—With the Disneyfication of Times Square at a fever pitch, it was only a matter of time until a cute and cuddly sensibility infected the surrounding streets of Hell's Kitchen. But that gritty neighborhood's sense of self (and sense of humor) may yet prevail. This drinking establishment, which aspires to be the city's first theme dive bar, sports a giant bowtied-and-jacketed pig standing sentinel at the front door; the interior is a colorful display of painted porkers. Yet the touristy feel doesn't extend to the drinks—they're as cheap as a subway token, and the mostly male, mostly plaid-and-denim-clad patrons are as content as bird dogs in the brush. Tuesday is ladies' night, during which female patrons can spin a wheel for discounted beverages when they buy (or are bought) a drink.

TONIC, 107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—Sept. 5: Former dB's drummer WILL RIGBY.

TRAMPS, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Sept. 1: SUPERSUCKERS, THE HELLACOPTERS, and ZEN GUERRILLA (see Maxwell's).

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Sept. 1: Bronx-born rapper KOOL KEITH possesses enough fictional personas to fill a page of the Manhattan phone book. A founding member of the old-school icons the Ultramagnetic MCs, Keith is also the extraterrestrial surgeon Dr. Octagon, the suicidal Dr. Doom, and the DAT-hating Robbie Analog. In his present incarnation, as the main character in the title of his new album, "Black Elvis/Lost in Space," Keith raps his way through a hilariously warped universe that hints at his true identity: the mutant offspring of George Clinton. Sept. 2: ANDY STOCHANSKY has been Ani DiFranco's drummer for the past seven years, but that hasn't kept him from the studio. In 1995 he put out an independent release of his own quirky atmospheric music, and he's returned now with "Radio Fusebox," a collection of darkly charming ballads and not-quite-ready-for-the-pop-charts songs.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Starting Sept. 7: MARY CLEERE HARAN, the preëminent interpreter of the great American songbook, turns her attention to the popular songs of the Roaring Twenties. Dining.

BIRDLAND, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Sept. 2-4: The trio of pianist PAUL BLEY, bassist GARY PEACOCK, and drummer PAUL MOTIAN may not play together on a regular basis, but you'd never know it from their uncanny musical telepathy. Then again, working as a team on and off for close to forty years can't help but foster a certain amount of familiarity and shared intuition. These guys can swing with the best of them, yet their true métier is tempoless group interplay that pushes both standards and originals right to the brink of free, if disciplined, improvisation. The quiet intensity of their compact, concentrated sets can be exhilarating. Dining.

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (4758592)—Railing against the watery pop-jazz of SPYRO GYRA (through Sept. 5) is sort of like disdaining tofu: you can't hate something that's hardly there. Dining.

IRIDIUM, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Sept. 5: The hearts of keyboardist LARRY GOLDINGS, guitarist PETER BERNSTEIN, and drummer BILLY STEWART reside in the organ-based funk-bop sessions of the nineteen-sixties, but lately they've expanded their horizons a bit. "Moonbird," the snappy trio's latest, has versions of Randy Newman's "I Think It's Going to Rain Today" and Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock"—the kind of tunes you normally wouldn't find on, say, a vintage Captain Jack McDuff or Jimmy McGriff album. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator LES PAUL.

JAZZ STANDARD, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Pianist JASON MORAN belongs to that shifting conglomerate of innovative young players which centers around saxophonist Greg Osby, who, a decade ago, was a smart upstart like his protégés. On Sept. 1-2, Moran settles in here with his trio; on Sept. 3-5, he expands his group to include vibraphonist STEFON HARRIS and, surprise, GREG OSBY. Dining.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through Sept. 5: HILTON RUIZ AND THE LATIN JAZZ CLASSICS BAND. Pianist Ruiz, whose idiomatic versatility laid the groundwork for such recent genre benders as Danilo Perez and Ed Simon, is equally at home with both Latin music and jazz. The unsung hero of innumerable groups from the past two decades, he deserves serious appreciation for his own dexterous piano work. Dining.

Up Over Jazz Café, 351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—In his new band, Circle Chant, the Panamanian bassist **SANTI DIBRIANO** (Sept. 4-5) may have the fierce young jazz saxophonist **ABRAHAM BURTON** on hand, but the presence of hard-core Latin players and the addition of violin and hand percussion hint strongly at Central American roots music.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Sept. 5: The **TOM HARRELL** quintet. Much like his sometime partner Joe Lovano, trumpet and flugelhorn player Harrell loves to mix it up every chance he gets. Judging from its personnel, his latest ensemble is ripe with promise: drummer **CARL ALLEN,** pianist **XAVIER DAVIS,** and guitarist **FREDDIE BRYANT** join the ingenious horn player. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Zinc Bar, 90 W. Houston St. (477-8337)—A young guitarist with flying fingers and a heart filled with bebop, **RON AFFIF** has a regular Monday gig at an intimate space that caters to guitar freaks—just right for a six-string whiz with almost too much to say. Saturdays and Sundays feature Brazilian jazz.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—Sharing the Roof Garden with Rodin's "Three Shades" this summer is a group of monumental bronzes by the great, gloomy Polish sculptor Magdalena Abakanowicz. Three of the five are new works, created especially for the installation here: a pair of colossal skulls, a flock of beautiful, weighty birds, and a troop of nearly life-size headless figures who stand at attention, as though waiting for some mournful command. Through late fall. . . . ¶ "Klee Cities" gathers a sampling of the artist's architectural caprices, from his radiant early watercolors of Tunisia to the nearly abstract geometric edifices of his later years. One of the most irresistible of these, "Stricken City," is described in the wall text as a medieval town, but it bears a suspicious resemblance to Bruegel's ziggurat-shaped Tower of Babel. In the sky above the tower's highest ramp, a fat black arrow hovers, pointing downward. Who else but Klee (and perhaps Saul Steinberg) could make divine disapproval so graphic, and so satisfying? Through Sept. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—In the era of the gas-guzzling S.U.V., "Different Roads: Automobiles for the Next Century" offers an appealingly contrarian view of our automotive future, in the form of nine sleek European-size roadsters parked in the Rockefeller Sculpture Garden. At once conscientious and cute, they incorporate ecological features like hybrid fuels, a lighter but stronger "spaceframe" chassis, and simplified manufacturing techniques that keep costs down. In their design, most seem to have been influenced by the resurgent VW Beetle, with its bubble-shaped body and protractor windows. The smallest of these new models, the Daimler-Chrysler Smart Car (developed with Swatch), takes four and a half hours to produce, occupies half a parking space, and has a vaguely familiar, thoracic compactness. It would look great in black, with a pair of mandibles attached to the hood. Through Sept. 21. . . . ¶ "The Un-Private House." Rather than just present his selection of twenty-six recent house designs as the lively grab bag that it is, curator Terence Riley tries to dress it up as a form of cultural trend-spotting. As far as ideas go, this show is pure bluff. A couple of the projects here—most notably Shigeru Ban's hilarious Curtain Wall house—seem to be intended for clients who have nothing to hide from their neighbors, but for the most part the desire for privacy seems to be on the rise. With their lap pools, ten-thousand-volume libraries, home offices, and high-tech multimedia amenities ("Residents can entertain friends who live thousands of miles away"), most of these lavish dwellings seem like scaled-down variants of Superman's Fortress of Solitude. But, if you set ideas aside, the show is a delight: it's thrilling to see so many genuinely adventurous, even kooky, home designs, and the abundance of scale models makes the exhibition unusually accessible to non-architects. Through Oct. 5. . . . ¶ "Fame After Photography." Departing from the Modern's usually crisply didactic installation mode, guest curators Carole Kismaric and Marvin Heiferman opt here for an almost unintelligible, jam-packed exhibition of printed, photographic, and cinematic materials that illustrate the bliss and blight of our celebrity-driven culture. For the patient viewer, there are plenty of droll, pathetic, and even aesthetic delights, e.g., a series of publicity pictures of Hollywood's most enduring Medusa, Joan Crawford, and Timothy Greenfield-Sanders's strikingly empathetic portrait of a very pretty Monica Lewinsky. Some of the requisite "art" photographs are tediously predictable, given the show's theme (Nadar's portraits of George Sand and Charles Baudelaire, for instance, or one of Cindy Sherman's "Untitled Film Stills"). But three of Andy Warhol's famous and seldom seen "Screen Tests" are exceptional. Did you know that Susan Sontag did one? Through Oct. 5. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

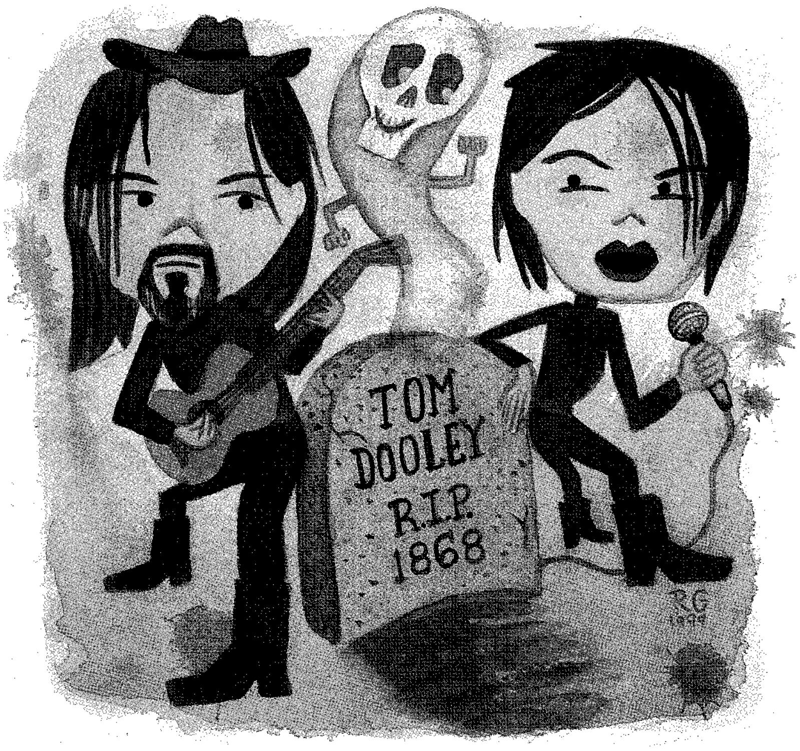
Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"Surrealism: Two Private Eyes." A vast exhibition composed of work from the separate collections of publisher Daniel Filipacchi and the late Nesuhi Ertegun, who, as a partner with his brother Ahmet, owned Atlantic Records. The show is rich in terrific works, including such iconic Surrealist masterpieces as René Magritte's "The Rape" (1934), Salvador Dali's "The Phenomenon of Ecstasy" (1933), and Giorgio de Chirico's "The Disquieting Muses" (1925), and two astonishing rooms—one devoted to Cornell boxes, the other to Surrealist bookbinding. There is also a lot of marvellous or at the very least curious work by lesser-known artists. On the other hand, there is a lot of dreck, both by unknown figures and by famous ones having a bad art day. With its idiosyncratic view of the Surrealist movement, this somewhat cumbersome show has nevertheless infused the typically slow summer season with a jolt of energy. Through Sept. 12. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"Andy Warhol: The Last Supper," a series of works created for an exhibition in a Milan bank not far from Santa Maria delle Grazie, the home of Leonardo's original. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The museum is closed for the installation of "The American Century: Art & Culture 1900-2000 (Part II: 1950-99)," which opens Sept. 26.

Whitney Museum at Philip Morris, 120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (878-2550)—"The Studio Stripped Bare Again," an installation by Jeanne Silverthorne, a sculptor who is fond of electrical paraphernalia. Along the walls of this leafy corporate atrium, she has arranged black rubber circuit-breaker boxes, connected by long parallel lines of conduits and wiring. Several bare-light-bulb fixtures, also in rubber, dangle forlornly from the ceiling. The effect has a sweetly nostalgic, unintrusive elegance. In a smaller gallery, other cast-rubber objects, some of them based on electron photographs of sweat glands, strain for grotesque and cerebral effects. Through Oct. 15. (Open weekdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—At the center of the new Gottesman Hall of Planet Earth is an eight-foot hemispherical model of our mother ship, rigged with an internal projection system that displays her clouds, oceans, and continents, all in motion. It's the kind of high-tech toy you can imagine Bill



Snakefarm, at the Bottom Line (see Night Life).

RODNEY ALAN GREENBLAT

Gates installing as a chandelier. Ranged around it are a hundred and sixty-eight chunks of the planet itself. Along with relatively familiar specimens of marble, coral, and sandstone, there are glistening buds of black pillow lava, an ice core, a chimney of pure sulfur, and a ventifact—a rock carved by windblown sand—from Antarctica (it looks as if Henry Moore might have left it there). . . . ¶ "Epidemic! The World of Infectious Disease" revisits a popular exhibit from the turn of the century, in which the museum focussed on tuberculosis. The current and broader look at infectious diseases includes giant models of viruses and bacteria which appear to spread across the galleries, a diorama of a "high-containment" laboratory, and a sculpted re-creation of an outbreak of the Black Plague showing rats running down the ropes of ships into fourteenth-century Venice. Through Sept. 6. . . . ¶ "The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition" features more than a hundred and fifty stark and beautiful pictures taken by Frank Hurley, the photographer crewman on that 1914-16 adventure. Also on display are crew members' effects, including clothing and a diary, and the James Caird, the lifeboat in which Shackleton and five of his crew made their amazing eight-hundred-mile journey to South Georgia Island in order to get help and return to rescue the entire expedition—which they did. Surrounded by videos of rolling icy seas, the tiny boat makes one suddenly thankful for sweltering New York summers. Through Oct. 11. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Winslow Homer: Illustrating America" displays a hundred and twenty wood engravings, nearly half of Homer's output during the early years of his career, when he worked as a freelance illustrator for publications like *Ballou's Pictorial* and *Harper's Weekly*. Except for a group of pictures depicting camp life in the Union Army, most are genteel courting and sporting scenes: ice-skating parties, croquet games, frolicking swimmers, and bewhiskered gents roughing it in the Adirondacks. It's a pleasure to watch Homer's stiff draftsmanship grow gradually more supple, but the blinkered gaiety of these pictures does occasionally become oppressive. No wonder that, at the end of his life, the artist devoted himself solely to penitential scenes of pounding surf. Through Oct. 10. (Open Wednesdays and Fridays, 10 to 5; Thursdays, 10 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse (718-681-6000)—"Urban Mythologies, The Bronx Represented Since the 1960s." This survey of thirty years of Bronx-related art begins with a series of time-lapse photographs by Camilo José Vergara; over two decades, an elegant building is lived in, deserted, bricked up, knocked down, left in rubble, then replaced with plastic-sided town houses, flanked by S.U.V.s. The show focusses on cultural activity during the economic desolation of the seventies and eighties, when the borough's leading art form was graffiti. One C-print by Martha Cooper, of a completely graffiti-covered subway train, shows the center car signed, in articulate appropriation, "United Artists." Through Sept. 5. (Open Wednesdays, 3 to 9; Thursdays and Fridays, 10 to 5; and Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 6.)

Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, 32-37 Vernon Blvd., at 33rd Rd., Long Island City (718-204-7088)—Works from every period in the career of the Japanese-American sculptor (1904-88) are installed in a garden and in open-air galleries carved from, and added to, an old photo-engraving factory. While it's all of interest—early gold-plated brass works, cast-bronze models for unrealized playgrounds, Japanese paper lanterns adapted for electricity—stone is the core medium. Its names alone (jasper, serpentine, Languedoc marble, red Persian travertine) are sensuous, and the stone sculptures rise among the birches, ivy, brick, and steel of Queens like indigenous art—relics of a civilization. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—"Shari Rothfarb: Water Rites," two short films and an installation on women and the mikvah bath, offers affecting pictures of the purifying ritual that helps define observant Jewish women's relationships to family, fertility, and sexuality. The title film is projected on a pool of still water, a sort of mini-mikvah. The other, "Ocean Avenue," Rothfarb's M.F.A. thesis, follows a woman in her fifties through her Brooklyn neighborhood as she searches for a daughter. The films take themselves a bit seriously, but the subject is a rich one, and well explored here. . . . ¶ Across the hall, Sophie Calle's "The Eruv of Jerusalem" looks at the way that public space is consecrated as private according to the rabbinic prohibition that forbids carrying objects outside the home during the Sabbath but that nevertheless provides for a symbolic extension of the home (a wire, say, strung around a neighborhood), which is called an eruv. Calle has created a conceptual version of such a space with photographs of fence posts around the gallery; a table in the center of the room is covered with photographs of and anonymous interviews about places in Jerusalem that people have adopted as part of their private world (one woman led Calle to the brick she was touching when her husband told her that he loved someone else). Both shows through Oct. 17. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (534-1672)—"The Astor Place Riot: Looking Back 150 Years," an installation of engravings and prints, examines the events of another year in which Shakespeare was hot, that time tragically so. In 1849, the loyal adherents of the melodramatic American actor Edwin Forrest—principally the rough trade and volunteer firefighters who patronized the Bowery theatres—gathered outside the Astor Place Opera House to agitate against the British actor William Macready, whose onstage restraint made him the darling of the uptown "codfish aristocracy." While Macready played Macbeth, the mob (some fifteen thousand strong) hurled stones, and New York City police fired into the crowd, killing twenty-two. The performance continued, but the play soon closed. Through Oct. 24. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Museum of Jewish Heritage, 18 First Pl., Battery Park City (968-1800)—The museum offers three floors: the first and third evoke Jewish life before and after the Holocaust, respectively, while the emotionally central second floor depicts Jewish responses to Nazi devastation. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 5; Thursdays, 9 to 8; and Fridays, 9 to 2.)

National Academy Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (369-4880)—"All That Is Glorious Around Us" (the title comes from James

FANCY PIGEONS FOR SALE
SUITE 323 BEAUTY 2 THE EXTREME 371-1262
CLOCKS.
SHOE REPAIR

Works on view in "Signs of the Times," at the American Primitive gallery.

Fenimore Cooper) presents sixty-five landscapes by Hudson River School painters, on loan from an anonymous collector, not all of them glorious. The strongest examples are by relatively obscure talents, from Samuel Coleman, Jr., and Homer Dodge Martin to Eliza Greatorex, while major figures like Cole and Bierstadt are represented by minor, even negligible works. Padding out these surprises and disappointments is plenty of picturesque boilerplate, especially the kind of rosy sunsets that once provoked such critical paroxysms as "And lo! Nature in her surplice of summer, ready to preach a sermon." After acres of such sermonizing crags and branches, it's a pleasure to come upon a small room of landscapes by current Academy members which includes George Nick's gloriously brash plein-air view of Times Square. Through Sept. 12. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, noon to 5; Fridays, 10 to 6.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway (219-1222)—"The Times of Our Lives," an exhibition of work that allegedly "explores and critiques the social constructions of age and aging." In fact, it's a chaotic grab bag of paintings, sculptures, photographs, and installations by familiar or unimpressive artists, accompanied by patronizing wall texts that interpret every piece as a virtuous assault upon stereotypes. If Bob Dole in his infamous Pfizer ad (which is included here) had adopted an aggrieved, defensive tone while insisting on full frontal nudity, he would have captured the spirit of this show perfectly. Through Oct. 17. (Open Wednesdays and Sundays, noon to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, noon to 8.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—"Such Friends," an exhibit that takes its title from a W. B. Yeats couplet ("Think where man's glory most begins and ends / And say my glory was I had such friends"), draws a rich bibliographical portrait of the Irish poet's impressively complicated social and literary life. On display are manuscripts and typescripts, often covered with Yeats's tireless corrections; inscribed editions of his poems; correspondence; and portraits by the poet's father and brother, both painters. Also included are volumes and letters by Maud Gonne, Lady Gregory, Ezra Pound, J. M. Synge, James Joyce, and others. Just skimming through this wealth of material can be exhilarating. Horseman, stop by! Through Sept. 11. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St. (864-4500)—On the first floor, works by sixteen of the nearly ninety artists who have passed through the museum's artists-in-residence program are on display. The strongest tend to be by recent alumni, including such well-known younger artists as Leonardo Drew, Alison Saar, and Nari Ward. Over all, sculpture predominates, and the influence of Frank Stella, at a low ebb in the rest of the art world, proves unexpectedly pervasive here. The second-floor exhibition, "From the Studio"—more aptly titled "Flip, Funk, and Fantasy" in the catalogue essay—showcases work by this year's three resident artists. Manuel Acevedo makes printed flip books in which his own haiku gradually appear. Elia Alba arranges thousands of muslin baby booties into geometric patterns. Xenobia Bailey (the funk element of the trio) offers a sloppy, wacky installation, less professional than the other two, but more engaging. Titled "Paradise Under Reconstruction: A Cosmic Moonlodge," it features an altar full of incense and feathers, a seven-foot-tall mannequin based on African totems, and a wall of brilliantly colored crocheted disks, as dizzying as they are delightful. Through Oct. 3. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

OUT OF TOWN

Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, 258 Main St., Ridgefield, Conn. (203-438-4519)—For "The Nude in Contemporary Art," curator Harry Philbrick has assembled fig-leafless works by forty-four artists, ranging from consummate draftsmen like Philip Grausman to gimmicky hipsters like the photographer Spencer Tunick (whose performance pieces amount to a latter-day version of streaking). The body is, after all, the one place where tradition and shock value intersect, and Philbrick's promiscuous embrace of craft and attitude alike has allowed him to cull a thoughtful cross-section of the art world. Nineties inevitables (John Currin, Lisa Yuskavage, John Coplans, Lucian Freud) are shown side by side with some striking newcomers. Among these, a trio of dramatized self-portraits by women—Anne Harris, Hanneline Rogeberg, and Jenny Saville—are particularly memorable. Saville's enlarged view of her own back (it's ten feet tall from ear to rear) has the colossal curving presence of a Richard Serra, transformed from Corten steel to mottled, luminous flesh. Through Sept. 12. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, noon to 5, and Friday evenings until 8.)

Bard Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. (914-758-7598)—"The Meaning of the Nonsense of the Meaning" is, despite its grad-schoolish title, an engaging show of paintings, sculptures, and conceptual high jinks by the Japanese artist and provocateur Takashi Murakami. His meticulous paintings of pop images in the *manga* and *anime* styles are so utterly flat that one assumes they're silk screens. His signature figure, Mr. DOB, has become a registered image with its own fan club, like Pokémon or Hello Kitty. But it's Murakami's sculptures that have gained the most attention recently: "Hiropon" (slang for "heroin" in Japanese) is a female figure with a Baroque tousle of red hair whose preternaturally large breasts squirt jets of milk. Her companion ("My Lonesome Cowboy") is an ithyphallic nude doing rope tricks with a spiralling lasso of semen. Through Sept. 12. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Yale Center for British Art, 1080 Chapel St., New Haven, Conn. (203-432-2800)—A retrospective of the great eighteenth-century British animal painter George Stubbs, one of those figures who straddle two worlds, the Enlightenment and incipient Romanticism. Basing his works on close observation and the study of anatomy rather than on previous examples and fantasy, Stubbs clearly belongs to the same world of empiricism as do his contemporaries Hume and the French Encyclopedists. At the same time, his work is unimaginable without the riches of the expanding British colonies: he painted the first kangaroo life study. In the same vein, there is Stubbs's tender yet precise painting "A Zebra." Ultimately, though, the artist must be regarded as a precursor of Romanticism as well, as his famous paintings of lions attacking horses attest. In these works, Stubbs demonstrates effects of terror and sublimity that one encounters in the full flower of Delacroix. Through Sept. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

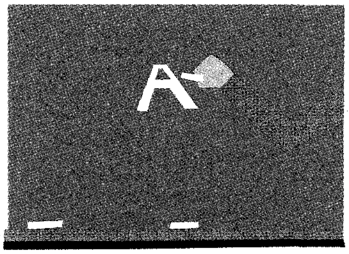
GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Summer-hours warning: Many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.)

Anne and Patrick Poirier / Tom Sachs—Shattering glass, bullet-ridden bodies, and flashes of hard-core pornography are not what one ordinarily associates with Montblanc, the German firm that manufactures luxurious writing instruments. On the sec-

BOOK CURRENTS

Alternative Schooling



"I AM teaching. It's kind of like having a love affair with a rhinoceros," Anne Sexton once wrote to a friend. Feeling naked and exposed—while worrying about being crushed to death—is an experience familiar to most teachers. In **Educating Esmé: Diary of a Teacher's First Year** (Algonquin), twenty-four-year-old Esmé Raji Codell, a fifth-grade teacher in a Chicago public school, describes some of her more trying professional moments: her discovery of bullet holes in a classroom window, for instance, and the day her field-trip bus was stoned by a neighborhood gang. But even her bleakest days contain tiny epiphanies. Codell recounts how she made one disruptive student the teacher for a day. He took attendance and administered a test, while she donned his jacket, headphones, and bad attitude. "You hate me 'cause I'm black!" she said, mimicking him, and was startled to hear his perfect imitation of her—proof that he'd been listening after all: " 'I love you,' he retorted, 'but I don't always love the choices that you make.' "

Tom Guthrie, a teacher in Kent Haruf's forthcoming novel, **Plainsong** (Knopf), also has too much on his plate. During a semester at his high school in a Colorado prairie town, he realizes that one of his students is pregnant and tries to shield her from the taunts of her classmates. Later, he refuses to pass a failing senior, and the boy makes a scary attempt at revenge. But explaining to his two young sons why their mother has left them proves to be the most difficult lesson Guthrie has to convey.

A child's first teachers are usually his parents, and they can be more than willing to give up some of their duties when the first day of school rolls around. For those hardy others, Jessie Wise and Susan Wise Bauer have written **The Well-Trained Mind** (Norton), a guide to home-schooling which focusses on the classics. The mother-and-daughter team is thorough and pragmatic, offering a detailed curriculum for kindergarten through grade 12, as well as opinions on everything from Latin (an indispensable language) to the Internet ("a mixed blessing") to high-school dating ("a waste of time").

KIM DEMARCO

Books.
[AT BARNES & NOBLE]

Know Thyself

THE SOUL OF SEX

by Thomas Moore

THOMAS MOORE
The SOUL of SEX
Cultivating Life as an Act of Love
BESTSELLER

Though science may reduce sexuality to a series of biological impulses, Thomas Moore sees it as an integral element of our interconnectedness, transcending the merely physical. With the same eloquence and invention he employed in *Care of the Soul* and *Soul Mates,* the bestselling author explores the inherent bond between sex and spirituality. (HarperPerennial)

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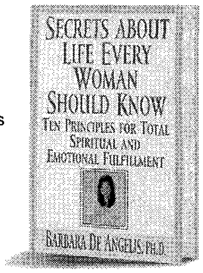
SECRETS ABOUT LIFE EVERY WOMAN SHOULD KNOW

by Barbara De Angelis, Ph.D.


SECRETS ABOUT LIFE EVERY WOMAN SHOULD KNOW
TEN PRINCIPLES FOR TOTAL SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL FULFILLMENT
BARBARA DE ANGELIS, PH.D.

In her many bestselling books, De Angelis has helped women and men to improve their relationships with each other. Now, she shows women how to enhance their relationship with themselves by following ten simple principles grounded in self-reliance and self-love. (Hyperion)

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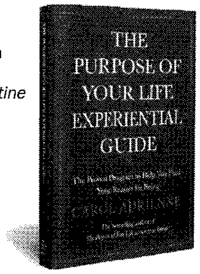
THE PURPOSE OF YOUR LIFE EXPERIENTIAL GUIDE

by Carol Adrienne


THE PURPOSE OF YOUR LIFE EXPERIENTIAL GUIDE
CAROL ADRIENNE

Follow your instincts, listen to your intuition and find your purpose. Carol Adrienne, coauthor with James Redfield of *The Celestine Prophecy: An Experiential Guide,* helps you understand your mission in life by teaching you to embrace the coincidences, the unexpected and even the obstacles you encounter every day. (Eagle Brook)

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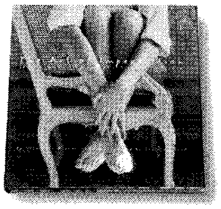
THE ART OF IMPERFECTION

by Véronique Vienne



The author of the bestselling *The Art of Doing Nothing* now presents ten meditative essays reminding us that we don't have to be perfect to be happy or successful. Indeed, we should celebrate our flaws and welcome the chaos of everyday life for the romance, creativity and personal pleasure they bring. Featuring exquisite duotone photographs by award-winning photographer Erica Lennard. (Clarkson Potter)

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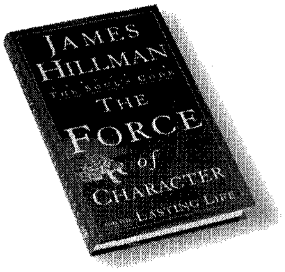
THE FORCE OF CHARACTER

by James Hillman


JAMES HILLMAN
THE FORCE of CHARACTER
AND THE LASTING LIFE

The bestselling author of *The Soul's Code* offers a new vision of life's most feared and misunderstood chapter: old age. In this empowering and original work, James Hillman demonstrates that the later years have vital purpose—the fulfillment of one's character. (Random House)

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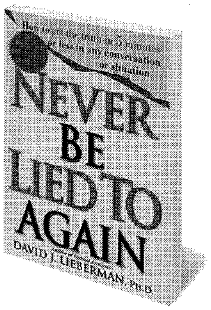
NEVER BE LIED TO AGAIN

by David J. Lieberman, Ph.D.


NEVER BE LIED TO AGAIN
DAVID J. LIEBERMAN, PH.D.

In a timely book for trying times, David J. Lieberman, Ph.D., reveals the skills you need to determine whether you are being lied to. *Never Be Lied to Again* is a dynamic look at the language of lying that teaches you how to analyze posture, facial expressions, word choices, and speech patterns to find the truth. (St. Martin's Griffin)

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Prices effective at store locations through 9/22/99 ond floor of Montblanc's flagship store, however, a “De-Acceleration Studio” has been equipped with exhibition spaces for video and installation art, along with jewelry, writing accessories, and complimentary postal service. The inaugural art works veer in two directions. The Poiriers' contribution, a vast bronze shield titled “Anima Mundi,” is stately and dull. Sachs's “Burn Baby Burn,” on the other hand, is exuberantly abrasive. Along with foam-core models and graffiti, two video monitors display a thirty-minute loop of mass-media mayhem. A minute or two of this induces a guilty euphoria; a few more minutes, however, and the thought of “de-accelerating”—perhaps by writing a long civilized letter to an old friend—begins to seem powerfully alluring. All you need is the right pen. Through Dec. 31. (Montblanc, 834 Madison Ave., at 69th St. 535-6061.)

"The Carriage Era in New York"—Eight sleek and beautifully designed vehicles from a century ago, including a conveyance for summer, an elegant wicker Three Spring Basket Beach Phaeton, displayed with accessories: a serious picnic basket, for instance, with the lid to a ceramic butter dish held down by a leather strap and buckle, and horse clothing, in linen as well as the more traditional wool. See also examples of the original accelerator—a vitrineful of whips and crops for all seasons and needs. Through Sept. 10. (PaineWebber Building, Sixth Ave. at 52nd St. 713-2885.)

Empire State Art Collection—For those too lazy to drive up to Storm King, a quintet of David Smith steel sculptures (along with nine works by other artists, all from the sixties) has been installed around the reflecting pool in front of the Vivian Beaumont Theatre. The works by Smith show the artist at his most playfully figurative, welding steelyard scraps into skeletal personages. Each feels happily precarious, like a collection of plates and brooms balancing on the nose of a seal. The same can hardly be said for the other sculptures on view, which include a pair of clunky bronze and iron Noguchi donuts, a two-tone Ellsworth Kelly wall, and an enormous aluminum George Sugarman Slinky. But the graceful green presence in the center of the reflecting pool is worth a trip on its own. Neglected except by pigeons, the scapular, mountainous forms of Henry Moore's “Reclining Figure” have offset the travertine dullness of the plaza around them day after day for more than thirty years. Public art, in its twentieth-century incarnations, never got any better than this.

"New Visions"—This all-women show includes some promisingly eccentric painters, most notably Maria Tomasula, who pins fruit and flowers to walls and then renders them with the precision of a vivisectionist. Her portrait of a pear skirted by fronds of its own peeled skin has a malicious delicacy worthy of Hannibal Lecter. Equally obsessive are the pastel portraits by Jane Lund and Susan Hauptman, who both draw family members and domestic objects (a child's shoes, a porcelain Madonna guarding a bowl of candies) with a velvety, eerie finesse. Through Sept. 3. (Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Rei Kawakubo—Fashion designers, it is fashionable to say, are the art stars of the nineties, and Kawakubo, who has dressed Merce Cunningham's dancers in stretch-fabric versions of her humpback couture, is perhaps the artsiest. Her Comme des Garçons boutique, next to Matthew Marks and down the block from Dia, is as much an installation as a store; its sculpted lacquer displays, in black and white, cleverly convert the labyrinthine dizziness of Serra's “Torqued Ellipses” to commercial purposes. And could it be coincidence that the brushed-aluminum cylinder that serves as an entryway was, like Serra's monuments, constructed with the help of shipbuilders? Whatever you think of the peekaboo displays of sweaters and gowns, this timely homage is worth a visit. (520 W. 22nd St. 604-9200.)

Group Show—Robert Gober, renowned for his creepy and melancholic sculptures of drains, sinks, and urinals, among other symbolically charged talismans of the home and of everyday life, has organized a group exhibition that speaks strongly to his own preoccupations. The show is very much an installation, with unusually dim lighting and the grating noise of a saw (it's the audio track from “Spiked Buck,” Robert Beck's video of someone insistently sawing the antlers from a decapitated stag). Through Cady Noland's cheaply fabricated, abstract stocks (the instrument of corporal punishment, not the corporate share), one catches glimpses of Anni Albers's exquisite gray-and-white Bauhaus textile grid. On facing walls, Gober has installed Joan Semel's large-scale paintings of nude couples; in certain paintings, the lovers display a pronounced pallor, as if they had been laid out on mortuary slabs rather than on beds. In the back gallery, Nancy Shaver's series of black-and-white photographs (1975-77) of found pieces of children's clothing has a hapless, forlorn air. Gober's show is without a doubt the most ambitious group exhibition of the summer: Welcome to the House of Dispassionate Horrors. Through Sept. 10. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Ron Baron—The approximately seventy figures of “Birds,” all made from Nova Scotian lobster buoys, look at home on the pilings at the west end of Canal Street. From inside the bay of the newly whitewashed Pier 34, the sculptor's tribute to Brancusi's “Bird in Space” emerges to varying degrees, depending on the tide, and echoes both the skyline behind and the grassy, ruined docks still hovering nearby, while providing the occasional haven for shorebirds. Through late fall. (Pier 34, Hudson River at Canal St. For more information, call the Public Art Fund at 980-4575.)

"Bee Hive"—Outside Shakespeare's Fulcrum, Robert du Grenier has unwittingly created a bit of performance-art buzz with a glass beehive (located in the gallery, but equipped with a special street-entry tube on Broome Street). Though the bees can't get into the gallery proper, the apian activity has caused problems for neighbors and for construction workers on a nearby scaffold. That is why, on a recent afternoon, you could find gallery owner Valerie Shakespeare and a male accomplice in a black mesh fedora swatting drones as they emerged from a silver ventilating tube (when lost and disoriented, the bees can turn violent). Fans of live installation might recall the Tilton Gallery's Xu Bing exhibition last season, which was cut short when the staff got tired of cleaning up pig droppings. Through Sept. 19. (Shakespeare's Fulcrum, 480 Broome St. 966-6848.)

"Die Bücher Der Künstler"—Two ever-prominent sides of the German psyche, order and rebellion, are amusingly joined in this survey, which collects examples of artist's books published in Germany over the past thirty years. The presentation is Teutonically thorough: six hundred and fifty-one books, by two hundred and thirty-nine artists, housed in Plexiglas vitrines and organized by category (“Painters and Drawers,” “Researchers and Collectors,” etc.). The books tend to be casually jokey, chaotic, and self-indulgent. Dieter Roth, for example, fills volume after volume with cursory scribbles, one to a page. For devotees of the genre, this is a bibliographical feast. For the rest of us, it has the look of a compulsively tidy stoop sale. Through Sept. 18. (Brooke Alexander, 59 Wooster St. 925-4338.)

"Signs of the Times"—A motley but seductive collection of hand-painted road signs, advertisements, and yard art, some of it dating back to the nineteenth century. With their crudely lettered exhortations to “Drink Howdey” or “Put No Paint on Roses,” most of these humble icons conjure a cheery, quizzical nostalgia. A weathered plank marked with a circled X and the legend “Crossroads,” however, is delightfully ominous, like a relic conjured out of a Robert Johnson song. Worth a detour. Through Sept. 3. (American Primitive, 594 Broadway. 966-1530.)

CLASSICAL NOTES

Mahler in the Marketplace—Mahler's Symphony No. 1 was an astonishing breakthrough of avant-gardism in 1889, and a good performance can still rattle one's expectations. Pierre Boulez and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra do just that on their new recording (on Deutsche Grammophon), a distinctive entry into a crowded field. Boulez has already committed four other Mahler symphonies to disk for DG—most recently the disconsolate Sixth, in a profound, refined interpretation with the Vienna Philharmonic. The First Symphony presents different challenges; its folksy flavor has seduced many conductors to veer toward kitsch—an unthinkable route for a musician inclined, as Boulez is, to dispassionate clarity. Still, this insightful reading is far from unfeeling; the klezmer interludes stab at the heart when they dance through the “Frère Jacques” movement, and the finale is powerful. The mighty Chicago Symphony plays spectacularly, with the only possibility for technical criticism centering on its much vaunted trumpet section. The ensemble's rich athleticism and the conductor's precise vision coalesce into a Mahler's First for the ages.

In hot pursuit comes competition from Hans Vonk and the St. Louis Symphony (on Arch Media). If the Chicago Symphony is a Concorde, the St. Louis is a DC-10. The group gets the job done efficiently, but neither its workmanlike technique nor Vonk's conception makes a ripple in a catalogue that includes thirty-eight other versions of Mahler's First. In a sense, this one isn't in the catalogue at all, since Arch Media is an arm of the St. Louis Symphony itself, created to provide the orchestra with a recorded presence during this era of elusive major-label contracts. Laudable though such an enterprise may seem (and it's far from unique to St. Louis), its commercial viability is suspect. But if you like defying market logic, or if you are intent on participating in what some are calling the future of American orchestral recording, you can buy the St. Louis disk on-line (at www.archmedia.org) for $16.99 plus shipping, which is doubtless more than your local CD store is asking for the Chicago recording.

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

"Intervistas"—This little patch of art with a view offers a salt breeze, a boardwalk, and plenty of grass, both real and Astroturf. Several developers would have it otherwise, and a few pieces deal with such threats. One street-corner installation is pasted over with flyers protesting a mall development; a set of natural-light boxes by the water includes a quote from a hotel prospectus promising Manhattan a “Narcissus mirror” in which she can admire herself. Others are less political—a pair of mandalas in brick and wire, a plot of recently turned earth, a split-level lawn—or refreshingly practical: a huge spread of dry dirt and grass seeds is credited to a state parks office and tagged as untitled. On a recent visit, it was occupied by a man sunning in a nasty thong. Through Sept. 6. (Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park, Brooklyn. Open daily, from 8 to 8.)

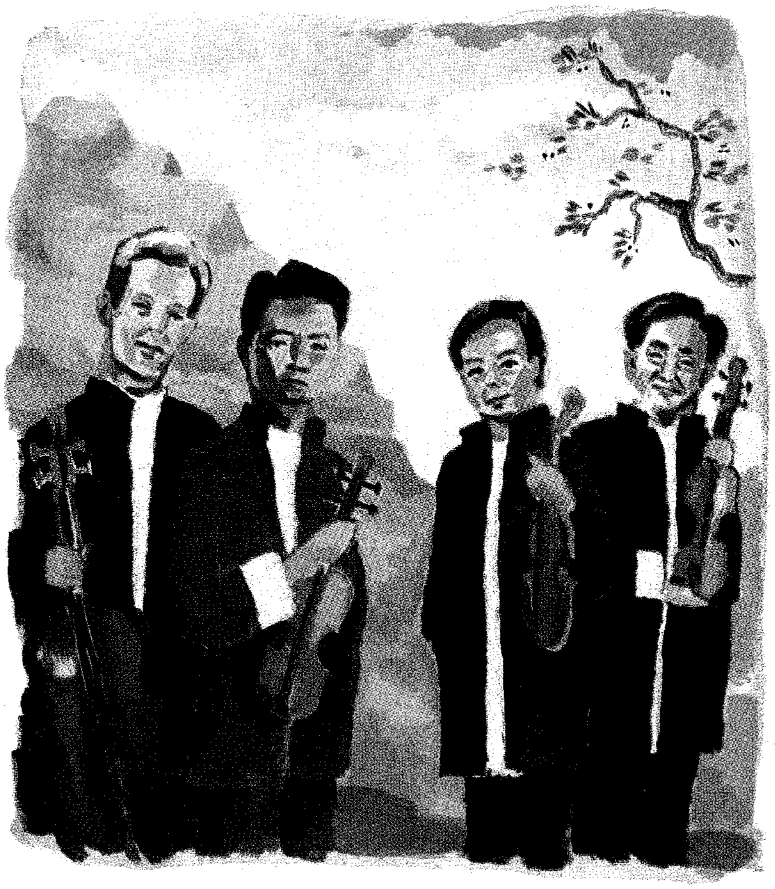
PHOTOGRAPHY

"Animals Are Funny People"—Works by Garry Winogrand, Elliott Erwitt, William Wegman, and others. Through Sept. 18. (De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 3973930.)

International Center of Photography—"Sea Change: The Seascape in Contemporary Photography." Through Sept. 26. . . . ¶ "Myths, Dreams, and Realities in Contemporary Argentine Photography." Through Sept. 26. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

Short List—**CARLOS EMILIO,** Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. 223-1059. Through Sept. 18. . . . **DAVID LA CHAPELLE,** Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. 274-9300. Through Sept. 15.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and the American Museum of Natural History.)



The Shanghai String Quartet performs at Music Mountain.

ADAM LOWENBEIN

CLASSICAL MUSIC

IN TOWN

"Beethoven on Broadway"—Trinity Church's summer Beethoven festival concludes, as tenor Steven Tharp, with pianist Mark Shapiro, performs an assortment of the composer's songs, including the six "Gellert-lieder" (Op. 48). (Broadway at Wall St. Sept. 2 at 1. No tickets necessary.)

Bargemusic—New York's floating concert hall returns to its normal, twice-a-week schedule for the fall season. In this opening program, Thomas Hill (the principal clarinettist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra) and pianist Randall Hodgkinson perform Alec Templeton's "Pocket Sonata" and are joined by Cynthia Phelps (who heads the viola section of the New York Philharmonic) for trios by Mozart, Bruch (his Eight Pieces, Op. 83), and Brahms. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. Sept. 2 at 7:30 and Sept. 5 at 4.)

Wild Ginger Philharmonic—David Goodman leads Mozart's G-Major Serenade (K. 525, "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik"), Weber's Clarinet Concerto No. 1 (featuring Keith Lipson), and Beethoven's Symphony No. 3. (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. Sept. 2 and Sept. 4 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

"Sundays on the Island"—This Sunday series takes place either in the living room of a way-uptown bed-and-breakfast or, if a small ensemble is on the bill, in a separate cottage out back. In this "cottage concert," pianist Ilan Rechtman (the series's artistic director) performs works by Chopin, including his G-Minor Ballade. Soprano Cleo Reiss is featured in arias by Bellini and Donizetti, and Pauline Kim joins Mr. Rechtman for Schubert's Duo for Violin and Piano. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. Sept. 5 at noon.)

OUT OF TOWN

(A selective listing of festival events within a reasonable drive from New York City.)

Berkshire Opera Company—Presenting the final performances of Stephen Paulus's new opera, "Summer," based on the novel by Edith Wharton; with mezzo-soprano Margaret Lattimore, baritone Michael Chioldi, and bass John Cheek. Joel Revzen conducts. (Koussevitsky Arts Center, Berkshire Community College, Pittsfield, Mass. 413-443-7400. Sept. 2 and Sept. 4 at 8.)

Maverick Concerts—Final concerts of this year's festival. Sept. 4 at 8: The combination of recorder and piano is fraught with musical challenge: though both instruments are capable of substantial variety in dynamics and shading, the recorder operates on an altogether smaller scale than the piano does. If anyone has mastered the balance between the two instruments, it is probably the husband-and-wife team of the Venezuelan recorder player Aldo Abreu and pianist Patricia Abreu. Together, they have delved into the relatively slim repertoire for their instrumental combination and have particularly championed works by Latin-American composers. This program includes works by Marguérite d'Harcourt (a French folk-song collector and composer, trained by d'Indy, who lived for extended periods in Peru), Joaquín Gutiérrez Heras and Mario Lavista (from Mexico), and the contemporary American composer Pete Rose (his "The Kid from Venezuela," which is dedicated to the Dúo Abreu). . . . ¶ Sept. 5 at 3: The Broyhill Chamber Ensemble offers piano quartets by Schumann, Turina, and George Tsontakis. (Woodstock, N.Y. 914-679-8217.)

Music Mountain—This festival serves principally as a showcase for string quartets, especially groups that, after several years in their gruelling profession, show every sign of continuing toward the elusive perfection that quartets spend decades seeking. The twelve-year-old Shanghai String Quartet is a favorite of Music Mountain audiences: having already played a recital in June, the group returns for a pair of concerts this weekend, assisted by double-bassist John Kulowitsch and pianist Ruth Laredo. Sept. 4 at 8: An all-Mozart program comprising the D-Major String Quartet (K. 499), G-Minor Piano Quartet, and Piano Concerto in E-Flat Major (K. 449, offered here in a scaled-down instrumentation). . . . ¶ Sept. 5 at 3: The foursome plays string quartets by Haydn (in C Major, Op. 74, No. 1) and Barber, and its colleagues assist in Schubert's "Trout" Quintet. Attendees who appreciate the art of fine ensemble work will want to arrive early, for a pre-concert performance, at 2, by the Canine Quadrilles, which is billed as "a congenial group of dogs, dancing with their human partners." (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. The season continues through Sept. 12.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Labor Day Weekend—Not leaving town? Here are a few local options for finishing off the summer. Sept. 4 and 6 at 4: Czech street theatre comes to Central Park, when the Studio Dell'arte, a four-member troupe from České Budějovice, in southern Bohemia, breaks out its life-size puppets for a production of Mozart's "Don Giovanni." (Central Park Band Shell Plaza, mid-Park at 72nd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Sept. 5, from noon to 5: More than a dozen tugboats converge in the Hudson River off 46th Street for a festival organized by the Intrepid Sea Air Space Museum. Events include a tugboat race and the ever popular nose-to-nose pushing contest. (For more information, call 245-0072.) . . . ¶ On Sept. 6, starting at 11 A.M., Brooklyn's Eastern Parkway becomes a maelstrom of bass-heavy music, colorful costumes, and jerk chicken during the annual West Indian Day Parade. For more information, call 718-625-1515.

Readings—Sept. 5 at 7:30: Friends of the late composer John Cage celebrate what would have been his eighty-seventh birthday, with a reading from his collection of stories "Indeterminacy." A video documentary about Cage titled "I Have Nothing to Say, and I Am Saying It" will be screened beforehand, at 6. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Sept. 7 at 7: By poets Lucie Brock-Broido and Charles Simic. (The Russian Samovar, 256 W. 52nd St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ Sept. 7 at 7:30: By poets Brenda Shaughnessy and Rachel Wetzsteon. (Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Sept. 7 at 7:30: By *New Yorker* writer Philip Gourevitch, from his book about Rwanda, "We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families." (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary.)

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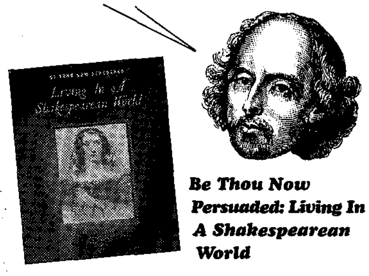

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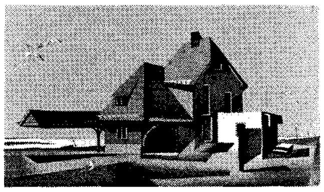
AUCTIONS AT SWANN



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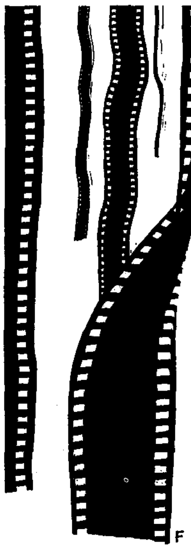


THE MOVIES

OPENING

All the Little Animals—Two outcasts from society work together to protect animals threatened by mankind. Directed by Jeremy Thomas; with Christian Bale and John Hurt. Opening Sept. 3. (Art Greenwich Twin.)

Bedrooms and Hallways—A gay romantic comedy, directed by Rose Troche. Opening Sept. 3. (Cinema Village.)

Chill Factor—An action thriller, with Cuba Gooding, Jr., and Skeet Ulrich, directed by Hugh Johnson. Opening Sept. 1. (Chelsea Cinemas.)

I Woke Up Early the Day I Died—An adventure film, based on a screenplay by Edward D. Wood, Jr. Directed by Aris Iliopulos. Opening Sept. 3. (The Screening Room.)

Outside Providence—The coming-of-age story of a boy from a blue-collar neighborhood who's sent to prep school. Based on a novel by Peter Farrelly, directed by Michael Corrente. Opening Sept. 1. (Cinema 3rd Avenue, East 86th Street Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

West Beirut—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Sept. 3. (Village East Cinemas.)

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

American Pie—Four senior boys at a Michigan high school decide to end their status as virgins and undergo various erotic adventures—some ridiculous or humiliating, some gratifying—which they then relate to one another. The writer, Adam Herz, and the team of Paul and Chris Weitz (the first directs, the second produces) aim low and score. "American Pie" is often funny, but you may come out depressed by it. The coarseness in itself is not offensive, but the notion that privacy couldn't possibly be a value that matters to anyone is.—*David Denby* (7/12/99) (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, and Union Square.)

The Blair Witch Project—A cunningly conceived and crafted exercise in suggestibility and terror. A student film crew goes out into the Maryland woods, attempting to record traces of a predatory witch who has, according to legend, held sway in the area for two hundred years. What we see is presented to us as the remnants of the project after the crew has disappeared. The footage has the haphazard continuity of tormented fragments; it's all handheld stuff, caught on the run. The documentary project is, of course, fiction, created by five film nuts from Orlando, headed by Eduardo Sanchez and Dan Myrick. In black-and-white and color.—*D.D.* (7/26/99) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, and State.)

Bowfinger—The new Steve Martin picture is written by Steve Martin; it also stars Steve Martin in the title role. If that makes it sound like a vanity project, fear not; this is probably the least vain movie of the year. Martin dispenses gags and characters with a generosity that borders on the manic. Bobby Bowfinger is a small-time, not to say failed, movie producer in Los Angeles who grabs at one last chance: he decides to make a movie without informing the star—Kit Ramsey (Eddie Murphy), at once the most heavily protected and the most uncontrolled actor in Hollywood. It's a great conceit, and it flows naturally into a series of turbid set pieces, as Bowfinger and his fellow-hopefuls (played with a will by Christine Baranski and Heather Graham, among others) lure the hapless Kit into scenes that will (a) cause him to react like an action hero, and (b) drive him crazy. The climax feels a little undernourished, maybe because no one would actually line up to see Bowfinger's amateur efforts, however sly his technique; but the comedy is so genial, and is directed at such a gallop by Frank Oz, that you can forgive it almost anything. With Terence Stamp as a mental-therapy guru, otherwise known as a fraud.—*Anthony Lane* (8/16/99) (Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

Buena Vista Social Club—In 1996, the blues guitarist Ry Cooder gathered together some wonderful Cuban musicians in their seventies and eighties for a successful recording project. Two years later, Cooder went back to Cuba, this time accompanied by cameras and the German director Wim Wenders, seeking out the men and women of Cuban music on the streets and in the old dance halls of Havana. The musicians still look great, play beautifully, and exude a stirring seriousness and dignity; the movie comes closer to pure happiness than anything else in the theatres at the moment.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Deep Blue Sea—A degraded cross between "Jaws" and "Frankenstein." Medical researchers, with the best intentions, create super-intelligent sharks, which then turn their teeth on the scientists. Scary, absurd, inessential. The disgraceful script is by Duncan Kennedy, Donna Powers, and Wayne Powers. Directed with occasional flashes of nasty wit by Renny Harlin.—*D.D.* (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Dick—The truth about Watergate, at last. It seems that back there in 1972, two teen-age girls—Arlene (Michelle Williams), who is troubled and melodramatic, and Betsy (Kirsten Dunst), who's a little too slick but a good egg—meet President Nixon (Dan Hedaya) during a tour of the White House and become the walkers of the President's dog. The girls, who have free access to the place, keep stumbling in their ignorance into strange scenes—documents being shredded, flustered aides like Bob Haldeman (Dave Foley) or John Dean (Jim Breuer) scurrying in and out of the Oval Office. The movie attaches foolish fiction to the willing contours of reality: the two ninnies never quite understand what is going on, but they wind up unseating the President. Some of the performers (mainly veterans of "Saturday Night Live" and the Canadian "Kids in the Hall") can be too broad, but this farce, directed by Andrew Fleming (who wrote the screenplay with Sheryl Longin), is genial and funny, and the idea of unconscious goodness flummoxing calculated evil is highly satisfying.—*D.D.* (8/23-30/99) (64th and 2nd.)

The Dinner Game—Francis Veber's movie sounds disappointingly courteous; the original French title, "Le Dîner de Cons," is much ruder and certainly closer to the misanthropic spirit of this farce. The premise is as entertaining as you could hope for: every Wednesday, a bunch of smart young Parisians hold a dinner, to which each of them must invite a complete idiot. In this case, Pierre (Thierry Lhermitte) is delighted with his latest catch, Pignon (Jacques Villeret), a spherical buffoon whose principal talent is for making models out of matchsticks. Needless to say, Pierre's plan stumbles when Pignon offers to help him sort out his life. No one could claim that the film is a distinguished contribution to cinema, but it would be churlish to resist its geniality and speed. In French.—*A.L.* (Paris.)

The Draughtsman's Contract (1983)—Set on an English estate in the summer of 1694, this formalist tease by the writer-director Peter Greenaway is a fantasia of conceits about perspective, and about the relationship between the artist, his art, and the world. It's also a victimization fantasy: the draughtsman (Anthony Higgins), a lover of landscape, is attacked and destroyed by those who love only property. The film is mannered and idiosyncratic; the speeches are so arch and twitty they seem to be pitched higher than a dog whistle, and the people talking are popinjays in perukes shaped as geometrically as the shrubs at Marienbad.—*Pauline Kael* (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 3 and Sept. 7.)

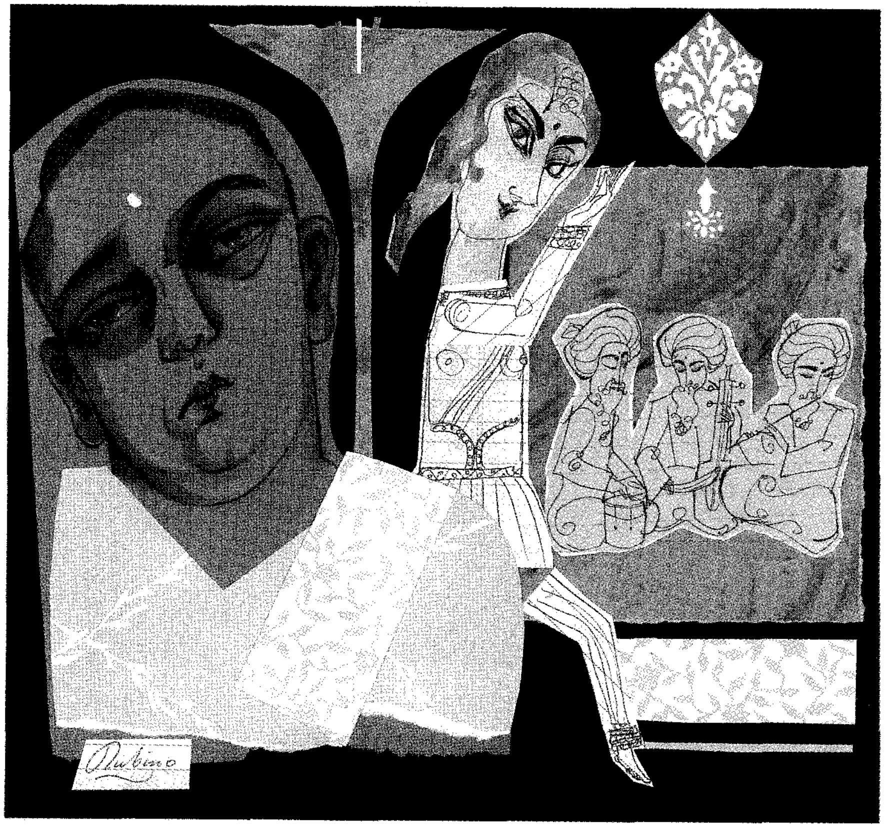
Duck, You Sucker (1972) (a.k.a. "A Fistful of Dynamite")—The two leads, James Coburn and Rod Steiger, are a plus and a minus—like all the other major elements of this weirdly paced yet fascinating Sergio Leone spectacle about the chaos of political rebellion. Coburn displays masterly ease in the role of a fugitive I.R.A. dynamiter who blows things up (real good) for Pancho Villa's revolution. His sardonic presence helps an audience absorb Steiger's excesses as a lusty Mexican bandit who by mistake becomes a peasant hero. The first section boasts a breezy brand of shock that resembles post-apocalyptic sci-fi: Steiger and his gang waylay a de-luxe stagecoach that looks like a converted railroad car (Steiger then rapes an insulting, sexually frustrated noblewoman); Coburn announces himself with an explosion and putters into the film out of nowhere, on a motorbike. Between patches of pulp Shavian debate, the rest of the movie has the lyric recklessness about violent men and their haunted pasts which would flower a dozen years later, in Leone's "Once Upon a Time in America." Music by Ennio Morricone.—*Michael Sragow* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Sept. 5.)

La Grande Illusion (1937)—The original negative of Jean Renoir's heartbreaking classic set in a German prison camp during the First World War has recently been restored, and the new prints are a revelation—the natural light in the outdoor scenes is beautiful, the little prison-camp entertainment show glows, the sound is clear and detailed. The movie remains as stirring and sweet-souled as ever. In French.—*D.D.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Ladies They Talk About (1933)—The racier elements of this women-behind-bars movie (made just before the censorious Production Code was enforced) include a cigar-smoking lesbian and a jolly ex-madam who cracks jokes about having run a "beauty parlor." Its one artistic distinction is Barbara Stanwyck's typically robust and varied performance as a beautiful moll who flirts with the idea of going straight. Directed by Howard Bretherton and William Keighley.—*M.S.* (Film Forum 2; Sept. 3-4.)

Marcello Mastroianni: I Remember (1997)—A beguiling memoir. The style is discursive, not dramatic, but how better to while away three hours than in the company of the most debonair man in movie history? His remembrances of fifty years of filmmaking are so relaxed and insightful that they seem to engage you in a posthumous conversation. Right up to his death, in 1996, Mastroianni masterfully combined emotional transparency and wit. The attitude he describes here is one of humane irony—toward his work and toward himself. Mastroianni merged with his roles but rarely lost the aesthetic distance he needed to shape (and have fun with) his characters. He is acutely perceptive, both about undervalued directors like Germi, Petri, and Monicelli and about giants like De Sica and Fellini; he says that Fellini's improvisations of entire worlds caused even the Maestro's star to feel like a happy spectator. Anna Maria Tató interviewed Mastroianni and directed the film. In Italian.—*M.S.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Mickey Blue Eyes—Michael (Hugh Grant), a polite Englishman working in New York, falls in love with Gina (Jeanne Tripplehorn), the daughter of a soldier in a Mafia family, which proceeds to get its hooks very deep into Michael. It's a good comic premise, but the screenwriters, Adam Scheinman and Robert Kuhn, and the director, Kelly Makin, can't liberate the jokes from an excessively complicated plot. Tripplehorn is too earnest for comedy, and Grant isn't used very well—the whole bit about his attempt to pronounce "Fuhgeddaboudit" is feeble, rather than funny. As aging Mafiosi, James Caan and Burt Young, both underacting, have some wonderful moments.—*D.D.* (Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)



At MOMA, Satyajit Ray's "The Music Room."

CORNEL RUBINO

The Music Room (1958)—Satyajit Ray's extraordinary study of pride carried to extremity. A great, maddening film—hard to take but probably impossible to forget. Worrying over its faults is like worrying over whether "King Lear" is well constructed; it doesn't really matter. With Chhabi Biswas as the aristocrat who has nothing left but his love of music—he holds a musicale in his decaying mansion. In Bengali.—*P.K.* (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 3-4.)

Night Nurse (1931)—There's a memorable moment in this hardboiled early talkie melodrama when a drunken rich woman has passed out on the floor of her home, and Barbara Stanwyck, the nurse who is tending the woman's sick children, stands over her and says disgustedly, "You mother!" William Wellman directed this picture in his fast, unvarnished style; it has a grungy likability. Clark Gable is the sexy villain, a thieving gigolo-chauffeur in a black uniform; his specialty is socking women. Stanwyck gets it right on the jaw. But Wellman knew how to use Stanwyck for her unsentimental strength, and she does some no-nonsense slugging of her own that startled audiences at the time—and helped make her a public favorite.—*P.K.* (Film Forum 2; Sept. 1.)

The Red Violin—Joshua Bell's impassioned violin soars above a dark matting of strings in John Corigliano's soundtrack score—the most valuable element to emerge from this grandiose French-Canadian project, an omnibus film that chronicles the life of a great violin made in Cremona in the late seventeenth century. Unfortunately, the director-screenwriter team, François Girard and Don McKellar, don't seem to have worked out a coherent idea of what the violin means to each of its owners.—*D.D.* (6/14/99) (59th Street East Cinema.)

Rodrigo D: No Future (1988)—The Colombian poet Victor Manuel Gaviria made this film (his first feature) about the adolescent boys who live in the barrios of Medellín; they don't have to understand English to respond to the music of the Sex Pistols. Punk has never sounded more at home than in this setting high in the hills that surround the drug dealers' city. Sitting on a rooftop, stoned *punkeros* shout lyrics into the huge expanse of sky and the distant mountains; Rodrigo, whose mother has just died, is full of pent-up energy and despair—he carries two drumsticks and beats on any hard surface. Gaviria has a fine lyrical gift: his images move in rhythm with the boys' restlessness—their aimless stealing, hiding, killing. The screenplay is based on an actual incident. With Ramiro Meneses as Rodrigo, in a cast of nonprofessionals who speak in their own slang; the words "no future" certainly apply—six of the boys who play main characters were dead within two years of the film's completion. In Spanish.—*P.K.* (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 3 and Sept. 5.)

Runaway Bride—A rumpled and eccentric romantic comedy with a fluctuating pulse and more odd corners than a rural junk shop. Julia Roberts is a bolter—a girl unsure of her identity, who keeps running away from men at the altar—and Richard Gere, who has developed a new, becomingly wistful manner, is a sardonic New York newspaper columnist who shows up in Roberts's small Maryland town to turn her story into news. The two are drawn together by self-dissatisfaction and bafflement. Garry Marshall, who directed, takes his time exploring the town, and the movie that results is poky but often charming.—*D.D.* (8/9/99) (Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, State, and Union Square.)

John Hurt and Christian Bale in Jeremy Thomas's "All the Little Animals."

ERIC BELLIS

Run Lola Run—Lola (Franka Potente), a ferociously willful punk girl with red hair, has twenty minutes to come up with a hundred thousand marks and save her hapless boyfriend, Manni (Moritz Bleibtreu), from the wrath of a big-time Berlin gangster. The writer-director, Tom Tykwer, shows us one version of what happens, and then he gives us two others, each of which takes off from the initial circumstances but has the characters make different decisions along the way, producing different climaxes. The action of the movie is rush, rush, rush, but the effect is contemplative, almost metaphysical. In German.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The Sixth Sense—A delicate, emotionally attentive, but very scary ghost story. In a Philadelphia drained of color and life, a shrink (Bruce Willis) who specializes in childhood anxieties becomes obsessed with one of his patients, a suffering nine-year-old boy (Haley Joel Osment) who "sees" dead people. The movie, written and directed by the young, Indian-born M. Night Shyamalan, consists mostly of long conversations between Willis, who is usually silent and very patient, and Osment, who may be an acting genius. Osment has the terrified face of an orphaned child of war; he is very moving. Despite an occasional hackneyed moment and too much of John Newton Howard's overbearing music, the movie is an admirable attempt at injecting some honest feeling into a curdled commercial genre, and it pays off in the end with a genuine shock that leaves one amazed. With Olivia Williams as the doctor's wife and Toni Collette, whose face often mirrors Osment's, as the little boy's loving but baffled mother. Tak Fujimoto did the somberly beautiful cinematography.—*D.D.* (8/23-30/99) (Cinema I, Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace—It has been more than twenty years since George Lucas directed a movie. Amid the fuss that has attended his return to the fray, no one seems to have wondered whether he was up to the task. With this film, Lucas demonstrates two facts: one, that he has kept abreast of the recent leaps in special effects, and two, that he hasn't a clue what to do with all the nondigital figures, otherwise known as "people."—*A.L.* (5/24/99) (Union Square and Ziegfeld.)

The Thomas Crown Affair—A spirited, entertaining remake of the profoundly unimportant 1968 movie that starred Steve McQueen and Faye Dunaway. In this version, Pierce Brosnan is the bored, man-who-has-everything plutocrat Thomas Crown, who makes off with a famous painting from the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Rene Russo is the insurance investigator who falls in love with him when she's supposed to be turning him over to the police. The movie is expert piffle for grownups, directed with great energy by John McTiernan.—*D.D.* (8/9/99) (Beekman, Chelsea West, Criterion Center, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Union Square, and Waverly.)

ALSO PLAYING

THE ACID HOUSE: Film Forum. . . . **THE ASTRONAUT'S WIFE:** Cinema II, Criterion Center, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **AUTUMN TALE:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema. . . . **BETTER THAN CHOCOLATE:** BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, and Quad Cinema. . . . **A DOG OF FLANDERS:** Chelsea Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Squre, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, and Union Square. . . . **DUDLEY DO-RIGHT:** Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **ILLUMINATA:** Union Square. . . . **IN TOO DEEP:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL** (reviewed in our issues of 11/16/98 & 3/15/99; in English): Lincoln Square and Union Square. . . . **THE MUSE:** East 85th Street, Guild, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **THE SOURCE:** Film Forum. . . . **STIFF UPPER LIPS:** First & 62nd Cinemas and Village East Cinemas. . . . **TEACHING MRS. TINGLE:** 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, State, Union Square, and Waverly. . . . **THE 13TH WARRIOR:** Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, State, Sutton, and Union Square. . . . **UNIVERSAL SOLDIER: THE RETURN:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and 64th and 2nd. . . . **THE VERY THOUGHT OF YOU:** Angelika Film Center, Gotham Cinema, and New York Twin.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—A film series entitled "The Joy of Pre-Code: Sex, Booze & Red Hot Jazz." Sept. 1: "Midnight Mary" (1933, William Wellman) and "Night Nurse" (†). . . . Sept. 2: "Safe in Hell" (1931, Wellman) and "Heat Lightning" (1934, Mervyn LeRoy). . . . Sept. 3-4: "Ladies They Talk About" (†) and "Ex-Lady" (1933, Robert Florey). . . . Sept. 5: "Call Her Savage" (1932, John Francis Dillon) and "Goldie" (1931, Benjamin Stoloff). . . . Sept. 6: "Waterloo Bridge" (1931, James Whale) and "The Kiss Before the Mirror" (1933, Whale). . . . Sept. 7: "Personal Maid" (1931, Monta Bell) and "The Worst Woman in Paris?" (1933, Bell).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films significant to the development of cinema but not currently in the museum's collection. Sept. 2 at 2:30 and Sept. 4 at 5: "Dog Day Afternoon" (1975, Sidney Lumet). . . . Sept. 2 at 6 and Sept. 6 at 2:30: "The Godfather, Part III" (1990, Francis Ford Coppola). . . . Sept. 2 at 6 and Sept. 3 at 3: "Wild Oranges" (1924, King Vidor; silent). . . . Sept. 3 at 2:30 and Sept. 5 at 5: "Family Viewing" (1987, Atom Egoyan). . . . Sept. 3 at 6 and Sept. 4 at 2: "The Music Room" (†). . . . Sept. 3 at 6 and Sept. 4 at 5: Three films by Maya Deren. . . . Sept. 3 at 8 and Sept. 7 at 3: "The Draughtsman's Contract" (†). . . . Sept. 3 at 8 and Sept. 5 at 2: "Rodrigo D: No Future" (†). . . . Sept. 4 at 2 and Sept. 6 at 5: "Yaaba" (1989, Idrissa Ouedraogo; in Mooré). . . . Sept. 5 at 2 and Sept. 6 at 5: "To Kill a Mockingbird" (1962, Robert Mulligan). . . . Sept. 5 at 5: "King and Country" (1964, Joseph Losey). . . . Sept. 7 at 6: "The Cameraman" (1928, Edward Sedgwick; silent).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Films from Latin America. Sept. 1 at 1 and Sept. 2 at 6: "The Deceased" (1965, Leon Hirszman; Brazil). . . . Sept. 1 at 3 and Sept. 2 at 8:15: "They Don't Wear Black Tie" (1981, Hirszman; Brazil). . . . Sept. 1 at 6:30 and Sept. 2 at 1: "Everything's All Right" (1977, Arnaldo Jabor; Brazil). . . . Sept. 1 at 9:10 and Sept. 2 at 3:30: "Central Station" (1998, Walter Salles; Brazil). . . . Sept. 3 at 1 and 5 and Sept. 5 at 6:15: "Little Thieves, Big Thieves" (1998, Alejandro Saderman; Venezuela). . . . Sept. 3 at 3:15 and 7:15 and Sept. 4 at 4: "Pizza, Booze, Smokes" (1997, Bruno Stagnaro and Adrian Caetano; Argentina). . . . Sept. 3 at 9 and Sept. 4 at 5:45 and 10: "Don't Tell Anyone" (1998, Francisco Lombardi; Peru). . . . Sept. 4 at 8 and Sept. 6 at 1: "A Coup at Daybreak" (1998, Carlos Azpurúa; Venezuela). . . . Sept.

5 at 4 and Sept. 6 at 5: "The Silence of Neto" (1994, Luis Argueta; Guatemala). . . . Sept. 5 at 8:30 and Sept. 7 at 1: "Transatlantic" (1997, Christian Laurent; Uruguay). . . . Sept. 6 at 3 and 7:15: "Belly Up" (1997, Beto Brant; Brazil). . . . Sept. 6 at 9:15 and Sept. 7 at 3:15: "Perfumed Ball" (1997, Lirio Ferreira and Paulo Caldas; Brazil). . . . ¶ Sept. 4-5 at 2: "James and the Giant Peach" (1996, Henry Selick).

BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—Sept. 1-2: "Western" (1998, Manuel Poirier; in French). . . . Sept. 3-4: "The Third Man" (1949, Carol Reed). . . . Sept. 5-6: "Horse Feathers" (1932, Norman Z. McLeod) and "Duck Soup" (1933, Leo McCarey). . . . Sept. 7: "Flamenco" (1997, Carlos Saura; in Spanish).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of Sergio Leone films. Sept. 4 at 2: "Once Upon a Time in America" (1984). . . . Sept. 5 at 2: "Duck, You Sucker" (†). . . . Sept. 5 at 5: "Once Upon a Time in the West" (1969).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Sept. 1-3 at 7 and 9, Sept. 4-6 at 5, 7, and 9, and Sept. 7 at 7 and 9: "The Bicycle Thief" (1949, Vittorio De Sica; in Italian). . . . Sept. 2 at 8: "Francesco, Giuliare di Dio" (1949, Roberto Rossellini; in Italian). . . . Sept. 4 at 8 and 10: "Triumph of the Will" (1935, Leni Riefenstahl).

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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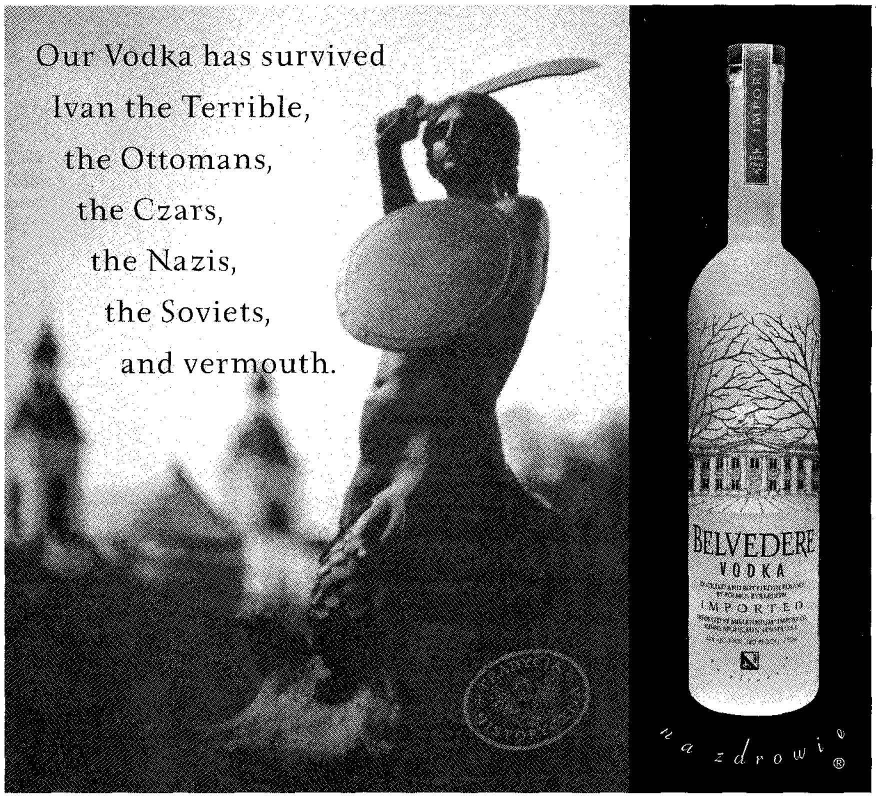
(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.



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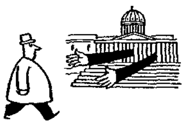
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

The Body gets serious.



JESSE VENTURA, of Minnesota, is one versatile chief executive. He can come at you either way. He can go low, or he can fly high. There he was last Sunday night on pay-per-view television, in a live broadcast from a Minneapolis sports arena, where twenty thousand overstimulated enthusiasts were shouting themselves hoarse over an exhibition of the garish performance art whose devotees still revere him as The Body. Ventura's role was to play the referee of the main event, a free-for-all in which a certain Mankind captured the World Wrestling Federation "championship" from Stone Cold Steve Austin, while a third contender, called Triple H, attacked the other two with a steel chair. Ventura delivered stern reprimands and bodily threw an uninvited fourth wrestler, Shane (The Rattlesnake) McMahon, out of the ring. All in all, it was a pretty good show. The only viewers who might have been disappointed were any who had tuned in on the mistaken though logical assumption that Triple H was Hubert H. Humphrey III, the Democratic nominee in last November's election, who, along with a Republican, got hosed by Ventura, the Reform Party candidate.

If refereeing a professional wrestling match was unusual behavior for a man in Ventura's position (that position being the governorship of a major state), he has been doing something even more unusual in recent days: he has been campaigning—energetically and with a reasonably good prospect of eventual success—for a genuine, far-reaching political reform. What Ventura is proposing is to abolish the Minnesota Senate and the Minnesota House of Representatives and to replace them with a one-house legislature.

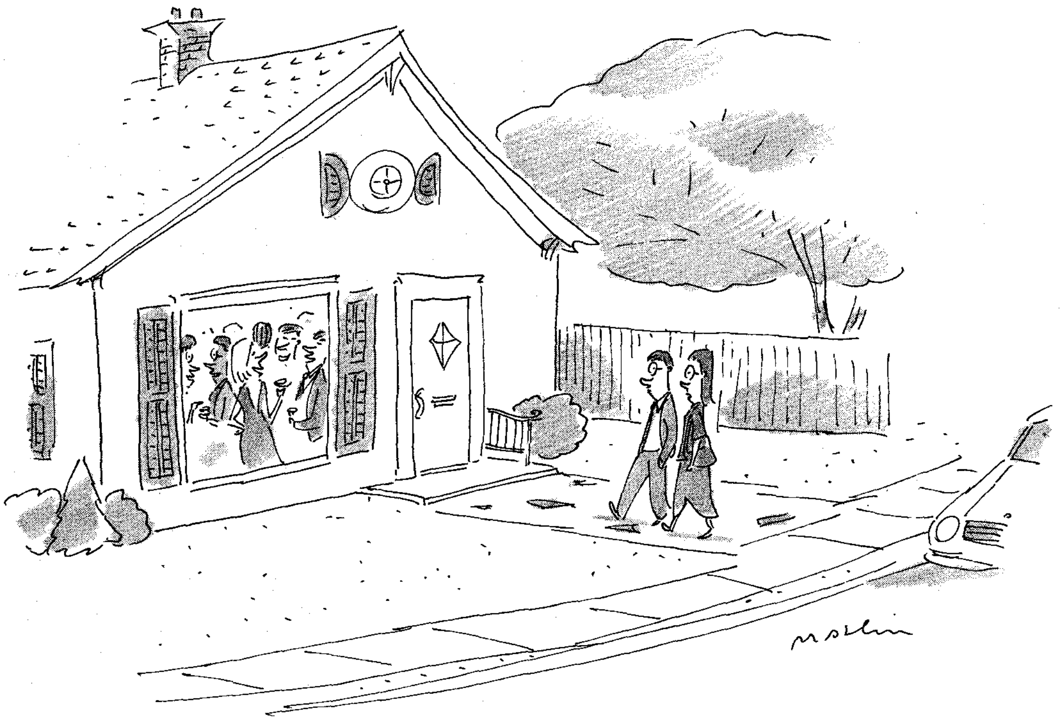
ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Justice Brandeis famously called the states "laboratories of democracy," and in policy areas like welfare and education some of them occasionally live up to that epithet. But where political structure is concerned experimentation is practically unknown. Though there are dozens of ways a democratic polity can be organized, forty-nine of the fifty state governments are simply Xeroxes of Washington: an upper house, a lower house, and a chief executive, all separately elected. And the Washington model, in turn, is simply a customized version of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British triumvirate of King, Lords, and Commons. Wouldn't it be interesting to try something a little different?

The idea of a one-house legislature has been a favorite of political scientists and progressive reformers for a century, but, so far, the only state that has ever taken it past the talking stage is Nebraska, which since 1934 has had what its citizens fondly call the Unicameral. Nebraska reformers succeeded where others have failed because the state's initiative-and-referendum process allowed the existing legislature to be bypassed; because the Depression had made the voters receptive to experimentation; because two additional, and popular, propositions (for local option on alcohol prohibition and for legalized racetrack betting) happened to be on the same ballot; and, above all, because Senator George Norris, who enjoyed near-divine status with the Nebraska electorate, threw himself wholeheartedly behind the proposal, stumping for it in every corner of the state. A one-house legislature has not made Nebraska an earthly paradise, but the citizenry's level of satisfaction with the Unicameral is by all accounts remarkably high.

Jesse Ventura

Jesse Ventura is as popular with Minnesotans as George Norris was with Nebraskans, and at this rate he may end up rivalling the great prairie progressive in the statesmanship department as well. Ventura needs the acquiescence of the current two-house legislature in order to get the question on the ballot. Normally this would be an insuperable barrier, as it has been in other states, and in Minnesota, too, up until now. But Ventura and unicameralism have some things going for them, including the support of five of the state's former governors and, more surprisingly, of a number of its prominent legislators, both Republican and Democratic. (The governor prefers to call this support "tripartisan.") Best of all, Ventura has himself, and his willingness to invest his popularity in a cause few politicians would have the imagination



"And now I'd like to do my impersonation of a happily married woman."

• •

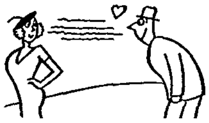
to take on. As he travels the state, Ventura uses many of the same arguments Norris voiced sixty-five years ago: a one-house legislature will be simpler, cheaper, more accountable, and more transparent; it will make gridlock unlikely and blame-shifting untenable; and it will eliminate conference committees, which, as Ventura points out, are "notorious for their last-minute, behind-closed-door deals in the dead of night." Beyond these, Ventura has an argument Norris didn't have. In Norris's day, there was a rationale, however feeble, for having an upper house: it was supposed to represent geographic areas, usually counties, regardless of population. (The result, of course, was to give backwoods types a stranglehold on state government.) The Supreme Court's one-man, one-vote decision of 1962, however, kicked that prop out from under bicameral legislatures, reducing them to little more than a jobs program for politicians.

Ventura has got hold of a terrific idea here. If he can pull it off—and if his success were to prompt people around the country to start thinking more daringly about structural solutions to the familiar problems of political apathy, political cynicism, and political nonparticipation—then the benefits will be felt far beyond the borders of Minnesota. And Jesse Ventura will have transformed himself into the most consequential and accomplished governor in the nation, and not just the biggest, the baldest, and the baddest.

—HENDRIK HERTZBERG

DEPT. OF LADY-KILLERS

How would Candidate Warren Beatty live down his love life?



WHEN Warren Beatty was asked over the phone the other day how his plans to join the Presidential race were coming along, he declined to comment on whether he will run. "I think you'll find that this is not something that I have discussed with my friends," he said. That's perhaps the wisest course, since just about everyone among the clutches of industry tables at The Ivy, Orso, and Mortons in Los Angeles last week had an opinion to offer. There was a general feeling of giddiness that—after the Republican Party's success in mining studio back lots and coming up with comparatively low-grade thespians as candidates (Sonny Bono, Fred Thompson)—here, perhaps, was a star that liberal-Democratic Hollywood could be proud of. Most agreed that, when it comes to drugs, Beatty wouldn't encounter the same obstacles that George W. Bush has. The director Oliver Stone, who was at Yale with the Republican candidate, thinks that Beatty would have the edge on the issue. "Warren is a health nut. I don't think he has ever done a drug in his life," he mused. "Personally, I wish he had."

But, when it comes to sex, Beatty makes Bill Clinton look like the guy in the corner with the Hush Puppies and the bad case of dandruff at the junior-high sock hop. Beatty's exploits are legendary in a town where competition is world-class, and his name has been romantically linked with some of the century's greatest beauties—Brigitte Bardot, Julie Christie, Isabelle Adjani, Natalie Wood, Vivien Leigh. "I'm pleased to say that I'm one of the few people Warren has never gone to bed with," the screenwriter Larry Gelbart declared. "But I do think it's time we put a womanizer in the White House." Peter Bart, the editor of *Variety*, who refers to Beatty as "the Priapic Prince," recalled a game he used to play with the film star. "I would give him the name of a model or actress, and he would instantly shoot back her phone number," he said. "He could recall more than twenty numbers off the top of his head."

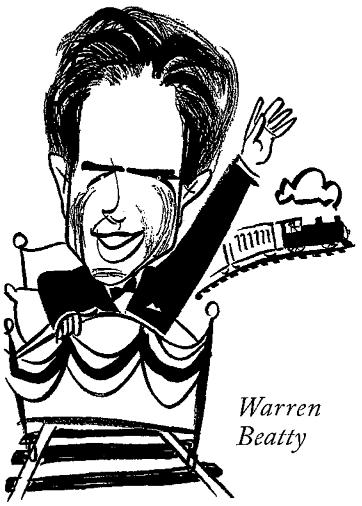
Hollywood wags don't seem to think that Beatty's reputation would work against him. For one thing, when Beatty was racking up his conquests (he is currently in a happy marriage and the father of three children) he was a single man and a movie star, not a married politician. But, more important, there's something about Beatty himself that makes people find his old antics, well, *cute.* Fears that legions of bimbos might erupt with tell-all revelations in the event of a Beatty campaign are probably unfounded, according to some of his associates. Unlike Clinton, Beatty managed to keep many of his former inamoratas as devoted and loyal friends. Julia Phillips, the film producer turned Hollywood chronicler, said, "All the women I know who were involved with him were wild about him. They have a lot of affection for him. He's a man who loves women—unlike some others I could name." The singer and actress Michelle Phillips, who dated Beatty for three years in the mid-seventies, said, "He broke my heart to pieces. But women love him and women will vote for him, because he will romance them. He'll romance the whole country. Romance is his forte."

Beatty's marriage to Annette Bening has left some to ponder what might have been. Gelbart noted that "at one point the First Lady could have been anyone in 'The Players' Guide.'" Another screenwriter pointed out, "I suppose we can be grateful to have escaped without Madonna's being First Lady."

Others were sizing up their potential status under a Beatty Administration. "I think I deserve an ambassadorship," Michelle Phillips said, laughing. "Or I could be the drug czarina." A publicist pointed out with pride that his client Joan Collins "would become First Ex-Fiancée." He went on, "She still has the engagement ring, incidentally. I don't know who broke up with whom, but they lived together for quite a few years. That was right after he ended things with Jane Fonda."

Some, like Oliver Stone, see Beatty's roué reputation as an unequivocal asset. "I think it makes him more attractive," Stone says. "Like J.F.K., his hero."

—Ann Louise Bardach



Warren Beatty

A DAY IN THE LIFE

New York's busiest mohel tells all.

On a recent Friday morning, Cantor Philip L. Sherman found himself stuck in traffic on the Cross Bronx Expressway. Sherman's destination was Melville, Long Island, where he was to perform his third circumcision of the day. He had already been on Elizabeth Street at 8 A.M., then on the Upper West Side. A tall man in his early forties with a neatly trimmed black beard, he prides himself on spacing brises far enough apart that he can arrive at each one in a calm, Zen-like state of mind. But this was not a Zen moment for the mohel. He reached into the back seat for his beeper and peered at it. Six new calls. He pulled a pad of Post-its from his glove compartment and stuck a few on his steering wheel. He balanced a folder on his lap. Then he called his voice mail on his hands-free cell phone and listened to his messages over the speakerphone. The messages all amounted to pretty much the same thing: It's a boy. When can we schedule a bris?

Sherman arrived at eleven-thirty, right on time, in front of a modern gray house with a bright-green lawn. He pulled a brush from his glove compartment and ran it through his thinning hair. Then he grabbed the Eddie Bauer computer bag filled with the tools of his trade, placed a sign on his dashboard—"Mazel Tov! Bris in progress. Please don't ticket"—and walked to the front door.

About sixty people were gathered in the mauve-carpeted, platformed living room. Sherman shook the new father's hand and took him aside.

"Let me tell you my secret," he whispered. "After it's over, be sure to thank your wife for doing a great job and giving you such a perfect son."

The new father, owner of the local Jeep dealership, nodded seriously as, behind him, a sixtyish woman with silver hair announced to no one in particular, "I was at a bris in Westchester and I heard, 'Oh, he does all the brises in Westchester.' And then I went to a bris in Great Neck, and someone said, 'Oh, he does all the brises in Great Neck.'"

Sherman assembled his instruments—a thin metal probe, a small clamp, a scalpel—and covered them discreetly with a white cloth. His own thumbnails are sharpened into points, in case he needs to separate the mucosal layer beneath the foreskin. He stood in the center of the living room, in front of a mirrored bar, with a tallis draped over his shoulders. The great-grandfather held Kyle Chandler (Hebrew name: Yehoshua Chanan), who was wearing a tiny, baby-blue yarmulke. The procedure itself took well under a minute, and the infant let out barely a squeal.

After the ceremony was over, Sherman asked if there was anything anyone wanted to add.

"Yes," the new father announced. "I'd like to thank my wife for doing such a great job and giving me a perfect son."

As the guests descended on a table piled high with bagels, lox, and smoked meats, Sherman said his goodbyes and closed the front door behind him. Then he stopped for a moment in front of a bed of hot-pink azaleas. He pulled three tiny gauze-wrapped packages from his pants pocket. And then he dropped all three of that morning's foreskins into the earth, and tamped them down with his heel.

During the course of his twenty-two-year career, Sherman has performed about nine thousand brises. He has done brises in bars, restaurants, and an Internet café. He trained during his junior year in college with the chief mohel of Jerusalem, because he wanted to be a "full-service community professional."

He pulled up in front of a modest house in East Rockaway at a few minutes before one o'clock. "As soon as I arrive, the anxiety level increases," he told the crowd. "Wherever I set up, people move away. But your presence is crucial—this is a beautiful life-cycle event to be witnessed. Please stay. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised."

Less than a minute later, the new father was thanking his wife for doing such a great job and giving him a perfect son. As he was leaving, Sherman whispered in his ear, "To enhance your status further as an ever-thoughtful husband, bring your wife a glass of juice. And remember, it was your idea."

A couple of brises later, at 5 P.M., Sherman arrived in front of a small house in Scarsdale. He splashed on some Polo cologne from a small green bottle, ran a brush over his scalp, and strode up the front walk, not for the last time that day. And to the closed front door of the house, where an "It's a Boy!" balloon sagged in the summer heat, his voice rang out, "Hello, it's a boy. The mohel is here." —DANI SHAPIRO

ALONE

I like my solitude,
This cowl I've borne
Upon my back—since torn
From amniotic sac—and which
I'll wear into decrepitude.
It is a veil both thin and rich,
This shroud that's spirit-toothed,
This briefly castled interlude.

—MAURYA SIMON

ON CAMPUS

With a new magazine, Chris Rock incites a humor revolution.

WHEN the comedian Chris Rock approached officials at Howard University, almost two years ago, about establishing a black counterpart to *The Harvard Lampoon*, he met with unexpected resistance. At a school that advises its incoming students that they are setting foot on "holy ground" and where, even at parties, faculty members tend to address one another by academic title, a "hip-hop-style" humor magazine seemed an unlikely fit. Things got off to a rocky start last fall, at a seminar designed to stir up student interest, when Rock and a handful of writers and producers from "The Chris Rock Show" engaged in a wide-ranging discussion on the state of comedy writing which was laced with so many "bitches" and "motherfuckers" that it might have been confused for one of Rock's own routines. A group of administrators, standing off to the side, smiled tightly.

A year later, however, Rock and the university seem at peace with one another. *The Illtop Journal*, the première issue of which will be released to students this fall (and to select bookstores as early as next year), does not lack for outrageousness; like its creator, it is often rude and sometimes even crude. (Among the pieces under consideration was a reimagining of Toni Morrison's Paul D as an "oversexed freeman gigolo.") But the venture has taken on a fierce activist spirit that has impressed the administration. Explaining to students the urgency of the magazine's mission at the seminar, Rock issued a call to action worthy of a civil-rights address, circa 1959: "Our comedy-writing skills," he told them, "are far behind that of the white man."

Rock has chafed at that imbalance for almost a decade, ever since he was a young cast member at "Saturday Night Live," surrounded by *Lampoon* alumni. Rock said over the phone the other day from his home in Brooklyn that he now hopes to produce a writer a year with the chops to succeed professionally, and he envisions a kind of comedy-writing pipeline that might one day rival the *Lampoon's*—and ultimately change the face of Hollywood. "Just the presence of *The Illtop Journal* will make things better," he predicted confidently.

In the pursuit of his goal, Rock has proven to be a tough and demanding mentor. At one workshop, he informed his young writers that there was no place in their sketches and parodies for obscenities. This coming from a man whose foulmouthed riffs have helped make him famous? Was he joking? "I wasn't handing in curse-filled sketches at 'Saturday Night Live,'" he said. "If you're gonna work for people, there's pretty much no place for profanity. Standup's different." Practical advice on such essential comedic principles as timing, structuring, and self-editing was dispensed with cheery ruthlessness. ("Sometimes," Rock said, grinning as he read aloud a paragraph that missed the mark, "you gotta throw that baby in the trash!")

Rock reserved his strongest criticism for sketches that were content to poke gentle fun at safe, easy targets. By contrast, he pointed to a sketch from his own show, in which he cruises the streets of Howard Beach in a van marked "Strictly for My Niggaz," drumming up support for a boulevard honoring Tupac Shakur. Like most of Rock's material, the sketch is wonderfully double-edged, skewering not only white racism but black entitlement, the notion that rappers have become leaders. "It's grounded in something serious," he told students, and then laid down his law of comedy: "Be serious and make it funny."

Diaron Price, a junior pre-law major who "grew up on Chris Rock," said that the workshop had opened his eyes. "Before, I was trying to write the way I would talk on the street to make somebody laugh. Trying to sound 'black.' But you know, it's like what Chris said: just by my writing it, it's coming from a black perspective."

In part to drive that point home, Rock and his writers and producers have compiled a two-page list of recommended source material that includes some surprises. "A lot of black comedians, all they know is Eddie Murphy, Richard Pryor. That's it. That's all they know," Rock explained. While Pryor and Murphy are on the list, so are "The Portable Dorothy Parker" and "Manhattan."

"Woody Allen?" asked one student, with evident distaste.

"Isn't the whole point to do for ourselves, to write our kind of comedy?" asked another.

Rock's elastic face hardened, his great eyes narrowed.

"When I got to 'Saturday Night Live,'" he said, "I robbed Mike Myers of everything he did. He'd do 'Wayne's World'? All right—I'll do 'I'm Chillin'.' Everything he did. That's what you do. White, black, whoever you are, I don't care—if you want to be good, you steal." One lesson delivered, he smiled mischievously and delivered another. "They've done it to us for centuries—well, we can do it to them!"

—TODD KLIMAN

POSTCARD FROM L.A.

A Hollywood psychic's inaccuracy fails to dent his popularity.

A LITTLE over a week ago, the chances of the world's coming to an end were hovering somewhere in the neighborhood of eighty-seven per cent—that is, according to Criswell, the late Hollywood prophet who claimed his predictive accuracy to be within that lofty percentile. "The world as we know it will cease to exist . . . on August 18, 1999," he forecast in his 1968 book "Criswell Predicts from Now to the Year 2000." He went on, "And if you and I meet each other on the street that fateful day . . . we will open our mouths to speak and no words will come out, for we have no future—you and I will suddenly run out of time!"

Though Criswell departed the world as we know it in 1982, his friends and admirers hadn't yet been stricken mute by the evening of August 18th. On that Wednesday night, an assortment of them congregated at the congenially moldering Boardners, an old-time Hollywood watering hole and former Criswell haunt. They came to toast the Criswellian apocalypse, and to raise a Martini glass to one of Hollywood's first celebrity psychics. During the nineteen-fifties, the flamboyant Criswell hosted a live program on Los Angeles television and wrote a nationally syndicated column (both titled "Criswell Predicts") in which he dispensed outrageous predictions while radiating low-wattage Tinseltown glimmer. His column and his appearances on the "Tonight Show" briefly made him something of a national character. It was Criswell who blazed a trail for all subsequent mass-media prophets, seers, and astrologers, from Jeane Dixon to Linda Goodman and Dionne Warwick's Psychic Friends.

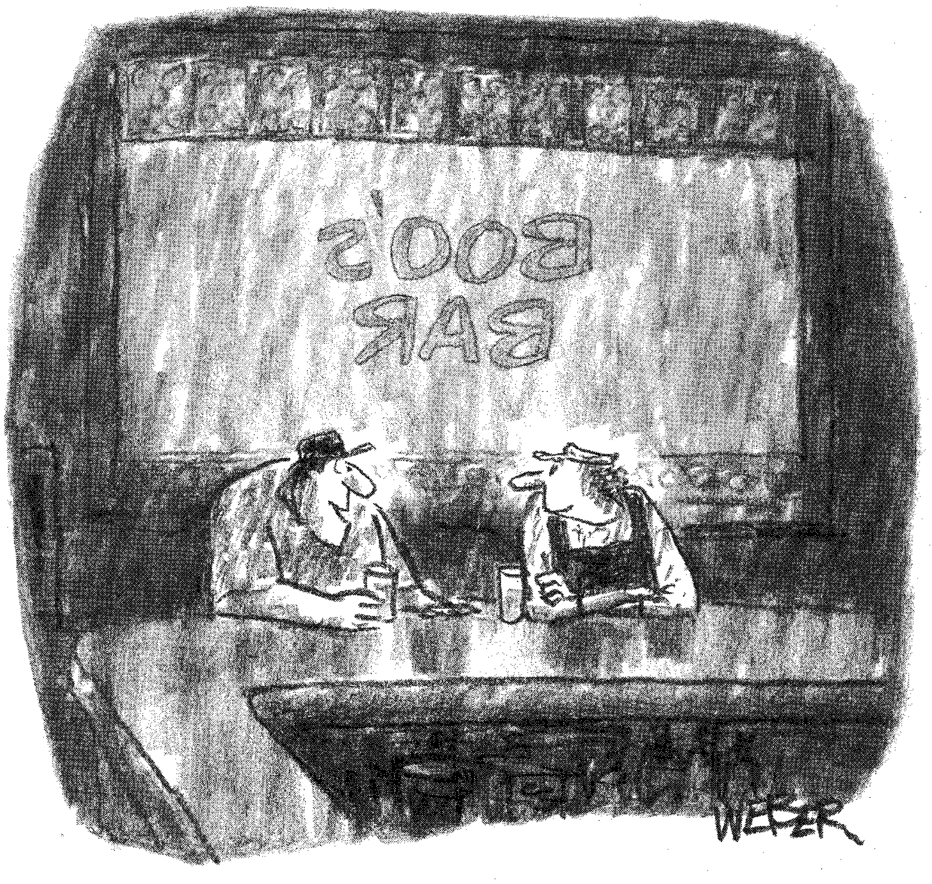
Today, Criswell is best remembered as the tuxedo-clad narrator with the platinum-blond pompadour who introduced several of Ed Wood's famously underproduced films, including "Plan 9 from Outer Space." Thanks to the enduring cult status of "Plan 9," and to Tim Burton's 1994 Ed Wood biopic, Criswell has been enjoying a kind of show-business comeback from beyond the grave. His record album of prophecies ("The Legendary Criswell Predicts! Your Incredible Future") has been reissued on CD. And Criswell memorabilia—including autographed photos and signed copies of his books—sustain energetic bidding on Internet auction sites.

Of course, Criswell's claimed eighty-seven per cent accuracy level has taken a savage beating over the years. For example, the tragedy he forecast for England ("Meteor Destroys London: 1988") failed to materialize. Likewise his political forecasts: "I predict the assassination of Fidel Castro by a woman, on August 9, 1970"; "I predict the District of Columbia within the next fifteen years will cease to exist as the capital of the United States. The seat of government will be moved to Wichita, Kansas, in the caverns beneath the city"; "There will be no welfare in the future, and I predict the death penalty for all freeloaders." He also predicted that the first Americans on the moon would be pregnant women, and that by 1981 Americans would be able to receive heart, kidney, and brain transplants via vending machines.

Among those in attendance at the Boardners fête were several of Criswell's former tenants (in addition to being a brinksmanlike prognosticator, Cris was also a Hollywood landlord). Charles Coulombe, who was just a boy when his family moved into one of the showman's apartment buildings, remembered that "Mr. Criswell," as he still called him, claimed to have lost his psychic gift after he came to Hollywood. "He told my father that he had had the ability to tell the future when he was young, but that when he started taking money for it he lost it," Coulombe said.

As the clock neared midnight, Coulombe, dressed in tails for the occasion, donned a white wig and commemorated the planet's final moments by channelling Criswell. Reading aloud the psychic's vision of doomsday, Coulombe intoned, "Future generations from some other planet will dig down through seven layers of rubble and find us some two thousand years hence. They will wonder what on earth was meant by the words 'Henry Ford' or 'Hollywood,' and what in heaven's name was a Criswell?"

Alas, when the last revellers left, at 2 A.M., Boardners was still standing, thus dealing the Criswell legacy yet another harsh statistical blow. But on a much more important level, Hollywood's greatest seer had vindicated himself: he had posthumously conjured an enthusiastic party in his honor. The significance of August 18th? It's Criswell's birthday. —JOHN WHALEN



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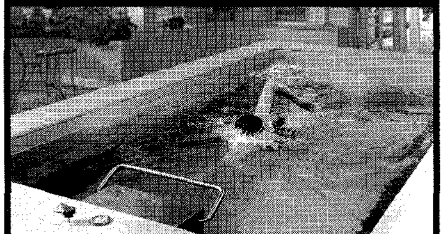

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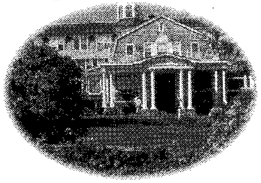

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THE SPORTING SCENE

THE BARD IN THE BOOTH

What Tim McCarver talks about when he talks about the game.

BY ROGER ANGELL

THERE are baseball fans, it must be admitted, who don't like Tim McCarver's stuff. After they've listened to the celebrated baseball analyst working another World Series game, say, or a Fox Saturday Baseball Game of the Week, or a WNYW Yankees game, with Bobby Murcer, or, before that for many years, a Mets yawner or triumph with Ralph Kiner as sidekick, certain friends of mine have found fault. A few of them sound apologetic about it, as if they have failed Tim somehow; others plain can't stand him. Because I don't understand any of this, I have been at pains to listen to their whinings, which can be easily summarized: Tim McCarver likes to talk. He laughs and enjoys himself at ballgames. He makes jokes—puns, even. He uses fancy words. He's excitable—he gets carried away by the baseball. He's always going on and on about some little thing. He thinks he knows how the game should be played. He knows too much.

Well, yes. Tim McCarver *loves* to talk. He is the only person I know who says "albeit" out loud ("That drive also reached the left-field stands, albeit about a hundred feet lower"). He also says "ergo" and "to reiterate" quite a lot, and is a master of the subjunctive mid-sentence tense-switch: "Had he broken for the ball immediately, he makes the play." Quotes from Milton or Shakespeare arrive without preamble—not just easy sporting tropes like "tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow" or "Cry 'Havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war" but a mid-game "Love's Labor's Lost" dredging, "Mirth cannot move a soul in agony," which he once produced, extempore, to describe Cubs players during a losing streak.

The answer to another, more abstract rap on Tim—"He's so smart, who does he think he is, anyway?"—isn't as easy, but, if pressed, the man himself might murmur that he's a pretty fair noticer.

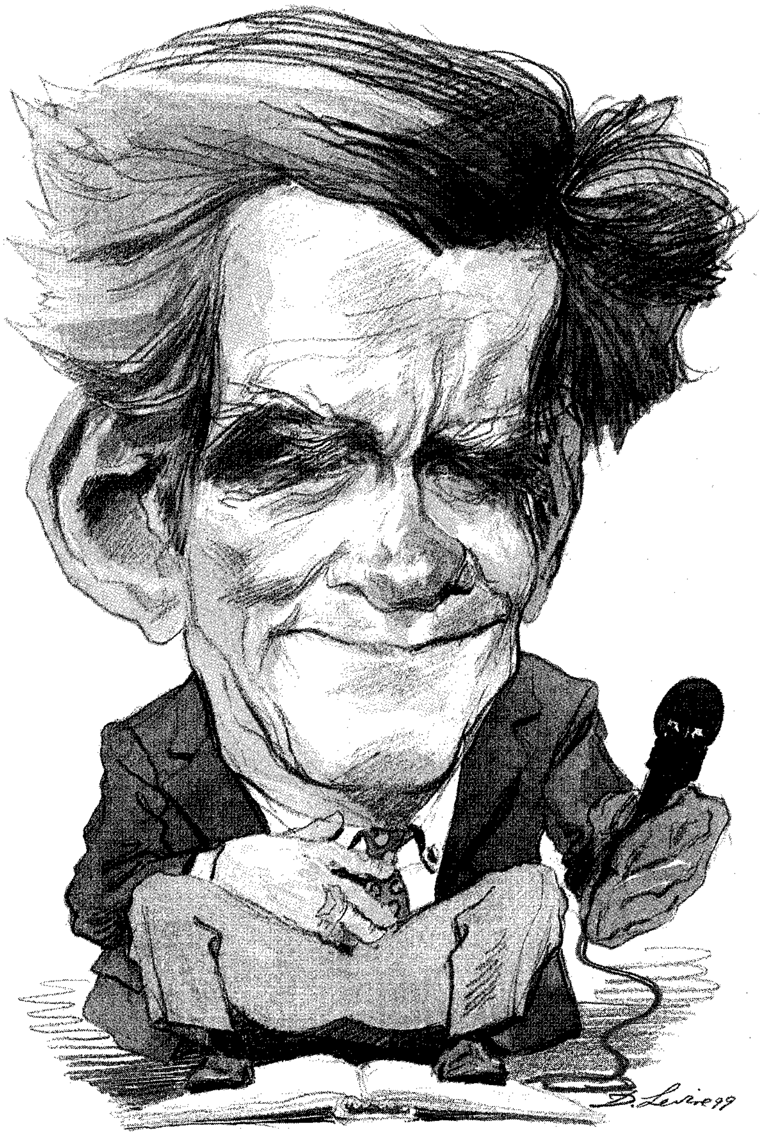
"The last thing Hank Aaron always did before he stepped into the batter's box was to clear his throat," McCarver said to me not long ago. "He went '*h'cch . . . h'mm*'—a little double cough that only the umpire and catcher could pick up. You heard it every time. The only other player who did that was Mike Schmidt, the great Phillies third baseman, and he made exactly the same sound. Two Hall of Fame sluggers with the same trademark. Isn't that remarkable?"

McCarver caught his first major-league game for the Cardinals in 1959, at the age of seventeen, and played his last with the Phillies in 1980, but contemporary fans can be forgiven if they sometimes view his intervening nineteen-hundred-odd games with the Cards and Phillies (with brief stopovers at the Expos and Red Sox) as no more than a useful warmup for his real career. During the countless TV hours I have spent in his company over the past sixteen or seventeen years of regular (I was going to say "non-stop") Mets and Yankees listening, I have rarely heard him mention his own appearances in a couple of All-Star Games, his participation in three League Championship series, or the three World Series he played in (he batted .478 for the winning Cardinals in the 1964 Series, against the Yankees, and won the fifth game with a tenth-inning three-run homer); when he does bring back some particular two-and-two Bob Gibson slider he called for or an ancient, still chewable bases-loaded contretemps, it is only to elucidate the game at hand, the one he is talking about. Aaron's little cough came up in a conversation this spring, when he was extolling the catcher's front-row view of things. "For a catcher, you know, everything is so crystal clear," he said. "As a broadcaster, you see the game the same way he does, only a couple of stories higher."

The catcher-commentator hookup pleased him, and his voice went up a notch or two, sliding into the alto as he went on about his job. “Where else do you get the opportunity to talk about what your mind has preserved?” he said. “Every little thing you’ve seen or noticed—you have no idea how much you’re storing. It’s instinct for me to watch where the center fielder is playing, depending on the count on the batter. Curt Flood, our center fielder on the Cardinals, used to quiz me about our pitchers and the signs I’d put down and where I’d set up behind the batter with each count and situation. I can see myself looking out at Curt Simmons”—a veteran left-handed pitcher on the same club—“and there in the background is Flood in motion, slipping toward the right-center-field gap with the pitch. He did this every time, he moved with every pitch. You know, I haven’t said this yet”—said it on the air, he meant—“but the center fielder is the only defensive player who never sets up straight away. He puts himself off one shoulder or the other of the pitcher, in order to get that jump. The only exception is Ken Griffey, Jr.—the only one I’ve ever seen who gets away with that.” Later on, in the telecast of a Mariners-Yankees game I caught a few days after this conversation, McCarver made this exact point about Griffey.

THE little colloquy is pure Tim. A subject, the catcher’s view of things, yields a theme—catchers and pitchers and center fielders—with illustrative variations, followed by a refurbished baseball truth that one somehow hasn’t quite noticed before (center fielders don’t set up straight away), and a closing vivid exception or lesson (Griffey is unique). The narrator’s happiness in pursuing the point has enticed you along, and you feel wiser and somehow younger as a result. McCarver, trim at fifty-seven, has a catcher’s classic strong jaw and thick hands, and looks to be in good enough shape to catch a late inning or two in an emergency, but it is his voice that slips into uniform in midgame. He is affable and charming, but his youthful, excitable tone, which still shows touches of his native Tennessee—“*Lahn drahve!*”—when he is running down a play or an idea, is one of the star turns of modern sport.

Baseball is the ultimate one-thing-then-another-thing diversion, and what you want for a companion in its meanderings is a man who enjoys the slow parts as much as the rapids. I can still bring back McCarver’s thrilled, precise reportings from the Astrodome during the agonizing Mets-Astros National League Championship’s sixth game there in 1986, and when I dropped this lure before him the other day he sprang after it in characteristic fashion. But then, shifting, he brought up another kind of game—a Mets-Braves night meeting in Atlanta, on July 4, 1985—which remains his own favorite Mets disorder. “July 4th *and 5th*, actually,” he said.



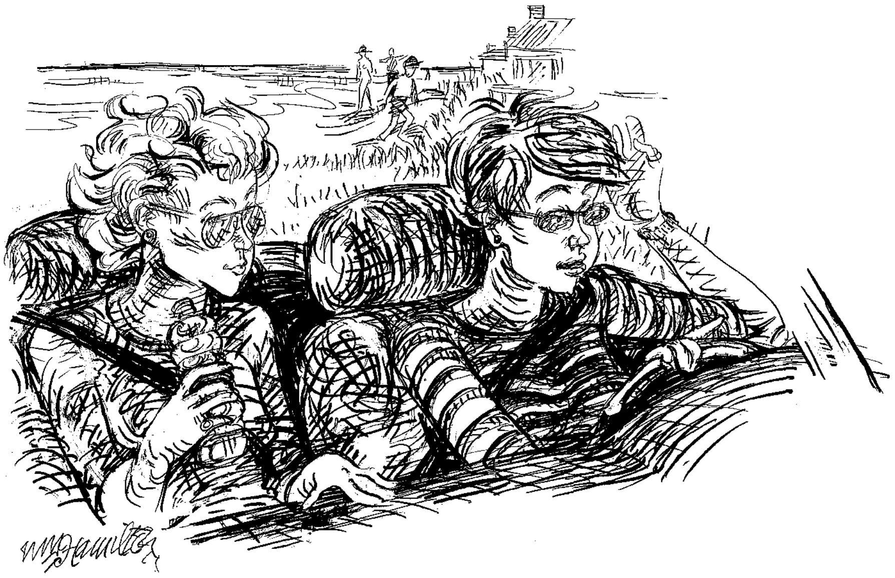
Rumors remain that the Mets fired McCarver because his persistent and terrifyingly clear presentations over the air embarrassed the team.

DAVID LEVINE

“Gooden started. Double rain delay. Keith Hernandez batted for the cycle. Their pitcher, Rick Camp, ties it with a home run in the bottom of the eighteenth—his only major-league home run. Then the Mets win with five runs—they still hold the record for most runs scored in the top of the nineteenth inning. Ted Turner shot off the fireworks at three-fifty-eight in the morning. There was a Shriners’ convention in Atlanta that day, and when we get back to the hotel at something like four-forty in the morning their motor scooters were parked in the lobby. Bizarre!”

Only later did it come to me that Tim and his fellow Mets broadcasters had to have kept talking for the better part of eight hours that night—a trek he had brought back for me all in italics.

EARLY each year, in this recurring winter dream, I find myself strapped down on a table in the Baseball Laboratory, with an iron cap affixed to my head and electrodes hooked up to my



"Can you believe it? A couple of page-turners, one affair, and, wham—it's Labor Day."

• •

toes and torso, while Dr. Pretorius, the mad scientist, bustles about in his white coat, pushing buttons and pulling levers that will deliver the most recent shocks and jolts of baseball news to my quivering psyche. "Shall ve begin?" he said in the latest episode, back last March, as he consulted his giant clipboard and punched in the latest horrid data. "Ready? Herr Mo Vaughn has left the Red Sox. He is ein Anaheim Angel now."

He flipped a giant switch, completing the circuit into my fan-brain. Bells clanged, blinding bolts of static crackled upward, and an array of instrument needles swung into the red. A thin curl of smoke arose from my left ear, but I didn't blink or stir. "Hmm," murmured Dr. P., regarding me contemptuously. "Is this lab animal kaput?" Further spirit-sapping trials were zapped into me—David Wells had left the Yankees; the umpires were filing a labor grievance to protest a proposed alteration in the strike zone—but brought forth barely a groan.

"Vun more," the doctor said, an Ernest Thesiger sneer of disappointment twisting his face. He twiddled again, then read out the final experiment. "After sixteen years, the Mets haff dropped Tim McCarver as their television analyst. He is McGone."

"No, no!" I shouted, kicking and flailing under my bonds. "Not that! It can't be! Aaaarghh!!" A long scream shattered the night.

The Mets have never quite explained their decision, which was delivered to McCarver by telephone. Rumors remain that it was Mets manager Bobby Valentine who pulled the trigger, because of McCarver's persistent and terrifyingly clear presentations, over the air, of some awaiting pickle or tactical miasma that the smiling skipper might have just brought upon himself with his latest pitching or pinch-hitting move. McCarver's mental swiftness and situational foresight are legendary; he is a congenital first-guesser. During a Reds-Pirates league-championship game in 1990, he correctly foresaw an awaiting disaster a full inning away, after Reds manager Lou Piniella, late in the day, had inserted a new catcher and new pitcher into the lineup in what Tim believed to be the wrong order. Lou didn't exactly appreciate the call, which played out exactly the way McCarver had foreseen, but when he learned that Tim had made the point before the event, not after, he calmed down. It isn't surprising that McCarver has had overtures to manage or to become a general manager (from the Expos, the Twins, and the Cardinals), nor that he passed them up.

The Mets replaced McCarver in the booth with their most famous family member, Tom Seaver, and Tim, accepting an offer from George Steinbrenner, moved along to the Yankees, where he has teamed up smoothly with the reliable, low-key incumbent, Bobby Murcer, for forty-seven games over Channel 5. Understandably, the two have not yet attained the Zen-like pauses and meshings of the long Kiner connection. The real mystery about Tim's firing, of course, is how the Mets management could have failed to sense that in an era of fluctuating rosters, expanding franchises, and perpetually decamping high-priced stars it is the resident radio and TV broadcasters who preserve the sense of familiarity and stability and character which we once attached to our favorite players, and to their team. The voices of Red Barber and Mel Allen, Curt Gowdy, Phil Rizzuto, Vin Scully, and Ernie Harwell are sewn into memory not just to the teams and heroes and games they talked into life but to the exact places and times of day and time of life in which we heard them, year after year. I need only think of the murmurous, unhopeful Ned Martin ("There's a foul, *carved* to right") to bring back my own summer sufferings over the Red Sox through the sixties and seventies, sometimes with a glimpse of me, in my bunk below decks, tilting my little portable to one side or the other in the dark to hold the signal from Fenway Park or far Comiskey, while the sloop I was aboard swung slowly at its anchor. Television shuts us indoors, to be sure, but the men and women in the booth—more expert now than ever before—keep their hold on the fan and the sport. Harry Caray died last year, and was mourned by many people who had never been to Wrigley Field; his son Skip is a play-by-play fixture in Atlanta, and his grandson Chip does the same work for the Cubs; Jack Buck's son Joe now teams with McCarver on Fox network games. The daily coverage of Braves games over the TBS Superstation, and Cubs and White Sox games over WGN, along with ESPN's Sunday-night games and Wednesday doubleheaders, have brought platoons of fresh announcers and game analysts into every sports-alert American home. The iron-tonsilled Ernie Harwell and Vin Scully are still at it, and if I list some other favorites of mine—Ralph Kiner, the retired Hank Greenwald, Jim Kaat (another Yankee Stadium fixture), the classically calm Joe Morgan, and Tim McCarver—it is not to dismiss dozens of others across the land, each of whom means all the game to somebody.

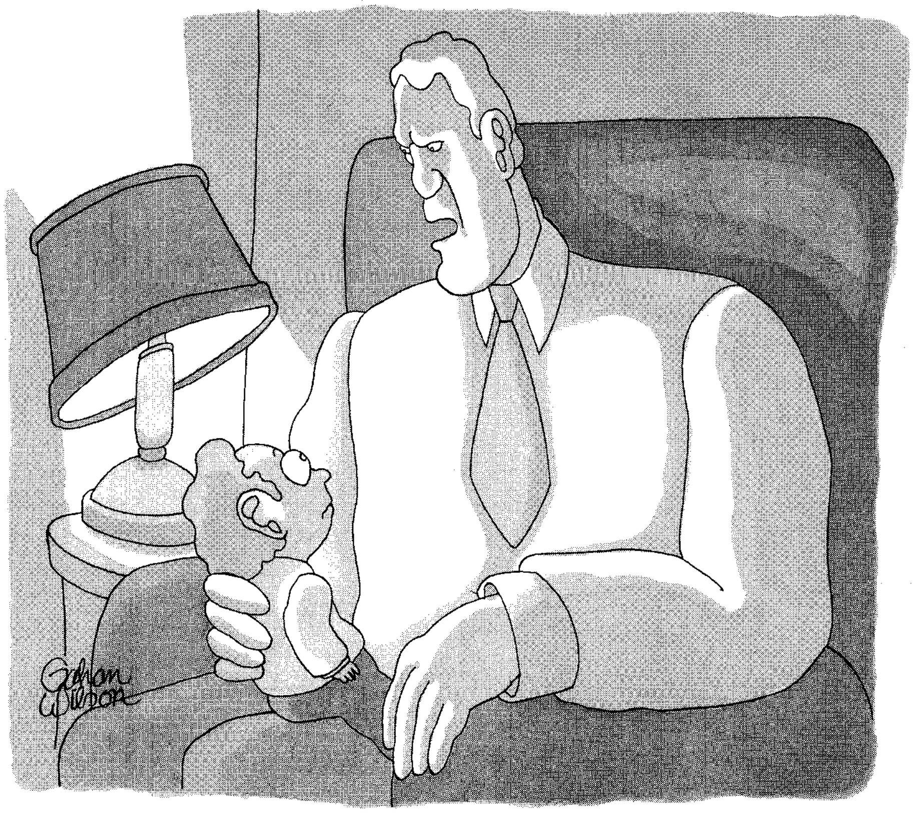
For young Tim McCarver, growing up in Memphis, it was Harry Caray, then chortling and braying for the Cardinals over KMOX, who was the model. "There was such a frivolity all the time," he recalls. "One of the things that's enjoyable about a broadcaster is the very fact that he prepares and then lets it go. There was something unbridled about Harry's passion."

McCarver, in turn, sometimes sounds like an unbridled twelve-year-old—a bright kid lit up not just by baseball but by his own vocabulary and the rush of his thoughts. This spring, pointing out that the head groundskeeper at Tiger Stadium is a woman, Heather Nabozny, he suggested that the often traditional anthem for the fifth-inning infield sweep might be called "Y.W.C.A." if played there. Lately, I haven't heard him roll out the classic nicknames he has sometimes affixed to certain pitches—"Sir Charles," for the masterful curve of a Doc Gooden or Darryl Kile; the "Dewdrop Inn," for a late-breaking curve; and "Linda Ronstadt," for a super fastball (after her "Blue Bayou," which, uh, well, it just blew by you, the batter)—but they'll be back. On the other hand, Tim also once managed a triumphant "Cone burned the Candaele at both ends" (faintings in the booth) when David Cone easily struck out the Astros' infielder Casey Candaele in 1992. Not bad, but not close to the moment in a Giants-Cubs game, back in the late eighties, when a Giants catcher, Kirt Manwaring, barely avoided a pickoff throw at first base with a leap back to the bag. "One Giant step for Manwaring," as Tim smoothly offered. On a Saturday this May, after the young White Sox third baseman Greg Norton ripped a two-run homer against the Yankees' Ramiro Mendoza, Tim discussed the pitch and the flaw in Mendoza's delivery with Bobby Murcer, and then cried "Noh-ton! Noh-ton!" in mock pain. Ralph Kramden had entered the booth.

THE son of a Memphis police officer, and the fourth of five children, McCarver became a multi-letter local football and baseball star. He attributes his athletic and intellectual persistence to his father, and his affinity for classical texts to a couple of teachers, Brother William and Kevin Gavin, at the Christian Brothers High School. On the point of accepting a football scholarship to Notre Dame or the University of Tennessee, Tim became a Cardinal instead, accepting a signing bonus of seventy-five thousand dollars. (He came within a whisker of signing with the Yankees.) Once in the majors, he continued his studies over seven post-seasons at Memphis State and the University of Oklahoma, from which his wife, Anne, had graduated. (The McCarvers, who have recently separated, are the parents of two grown daughters.) A regular with the Cardinals at twenty-one, in time he attached himself instinctively to grandees like Bob Gibson and Joe Torre, who were implacable in the field and suavely at home with sommeliers around the league. "Of course, Tim was a favorite," Torre said not long ago. "He had that intelligence and a great outlook. He was always teaching us ways to win." He recalls McCarver, his road roomie, coming in after a vinous night and climbing into bed with "The Gulag Archipelago."

Another friend, Steve Hirdt, the executive vice-president of the Elias Sports Bureau, the official statistician for Major League Baseball, says, "Tim is unapologetic about bringing an intellectual perspective to the game. He won't dumb down. Better than anyone, he understands that baseball has this great capacity that allows fans to play along in their minds. He has also stayed current with the players of the day, and connects his opinion about the specific play—whether to bunt or not bunt, that sort of thing—with the abilities of the batter and the infielders he's looking at. He's as well prepared as anyone I've ever dealt with."

On McCarver's pre-game warmups, he stops off at visiting-team locker rooms, where, more often than not, he finds a manager he has played alongside of or batted against, or a coach who was a clubhouse bridge partner. He may be working up a little riff on the actual value of Frank Thomas's on-base percentage, or the pickoff move of a Toronto left-hander he doesn't know well, and the old-boy network always helps out. "Getting ready is preparation by immersion," Tim said, "but only about ten per cent of what you get is used. If you have some-



"Let's have a heart-to-heart talk—one huge, powerful grownup to one tiny, nothing kid."

thing ready, it'll come out in a natural way. You can't be waiting to bring it up."

He had told me earlier about a moment in a 1996 Yankees-Braves World Series game at Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium, when he noticed Braves bench coach Jim Beauchamp gesturing from the dugout to shift his outfielders into proper position. "I wondered how Jim could be sure when he had got them placed right," McCarver said. "That's a deep dugout—how did he know?" Seeking out Beauchamp—they'd been Cardinals teammates—Tim learned that he'd waved directions to his left fielder until the player stood on an invisible surveyor's line extending out to a point between the headlights of an automobile depicted on a Chevron billboard above the left-field wall; then he placed his right fielder in the same fashion, perching him between the double "O" of a Hooters ad out beyond. Now they were straight away.

"It's such great stuff—you'd love to Telestrate it," Tim said (the Telestrator is an electronic gizmo that allows announcers to draw helpful arrows and underlinings on the screen image), "but it ended up on the cutting-room floor. It never came up. Now that whole ballpark is gone."

WHAT McCarver is most alert to, however, is the game itself. Since his presence on the scene is nuanced and unaggressive—he has avoided the macho flaunting of statistics which afflicts some of the younger practitioners—we don't always pick up on the lifetime database of playing and remembering which he can bring to bear within a little conversational reminder of what's up, how the count on the batter has suddenly altered the situation, how a defensive shift has been executed or blunted. Working with Joe Buck and Bob Brenly, he was in remarkable form during the latter stages of the Yankees-Padres World Series last fall, when every late deployment of the doomed and worn-down San Diego pitchers and batters by their manager, Bruce Bochy, appeared to run into the exact disaster that McCarver had seen lurking around a corner just ahead. "No game analyst ever had a better World Series," Steve Wulf, the executive editor of *ESPN: The Magazine*, said to me after it was over. McCarver, in any case, has incorporated some of this deep-dish knowledge and intuition into three baseball books, "Oh, Baby, I Love It!" (1987, with Ray Robinson); "Tim McCarver's Baseball for Brain Surgeons and Other Fans" (1998, with Danny Peary); and "The Perfect Season" (1999, also with Peary), in which the fibre, as in breakfast food, comes cunningly packaged with flavor.

Keeping close tabs on Tim McCarver, as I've been doing this year, I have come to realize that though the prime stuff is always there he never needs to force it. For him, instinctively, the game outweighs awe for the celebrity star or puff for the awaited, overtouted new record—a condition which permits critical distance and enthusiasm in equal measure. Late in July, he was unmerciful with the Indians' celebrated second baseman Robbie Alomar when he unexpectedly attempted a two-out bunt, with a base runner on first—bunting for himself, that is, and not the team. "I don't care who you are," McCarver said. "That's a terrible play by a great player." But two innings later, when Alomar began a double play in which he flipped the ball out of his glove to his shortstop, Omar Vizquel, who took it bare-handed and got off the throw to first in the same gesture, Tim was reduced to an exclamatory torrent that lasted right through the replays: "Unbelievable. That was unbelievable! . . . Watch: Throws with gloved hand, catches with bare hand. Unbelievable!"

During the Yankees' unexpected late-summer hitting drought, McCarver and Murcer (and director Bill Webb) provided illustrations of the bad habits that reliable batters like Derek Jeter and Tino Martinez can fall into when things aren't going their way—in particular, dropping their hands when at the plate, out of overeagerness. Watching Scott Brosius doing the same thing against the Royals one afternoon, Tim said, "Hitters have to trust their hands just like guys who blow the trumpet." The criticism was offered in McCarver's familiar upbeat manner, with the same alertness of tone in an unimportant inning that he had brought to bear during the final chords of the World Series.

A 12–4 drubbing of the Yanks by the White Sox, back in May, has stayed with me. Early on in the small debacle, McCarver lightly confected a "Rhode Island leaguer" (after the Texas leaguer, which drops in front of an outfielder) out of a tiny infield pop, though Bobby Murcer took him to task for it. When the Yanks, who were in a losing streak, again fell behind and a few fans began to boo, Tim reminded us that the amazing 1998 champions had never encountered hard times—they were "struggle-proof." Still, he said, we should not have allowed ourselves to expect that this year's Yanks would be a continuation of last year's: "Like that 101 Journalism course which I never took: 'Never assume.' " He was not much impressed with Chili Davis's leadoff solo home run in the fourth—"a tourniquet to a big inning"—and somewhere worked in the startling statistic that American League hitters last year had batted a collective .386 on the 2–0 count. He was almost affectionate with the floundering Yankees ("Nothing ever eats at Paul O'Neill inside: it's all outside!") until Tino Martinez got himself thrown out at home plate in the seventh, while trying to score from second base. "They shouldn't have done it!" McCarver said, shocked. "You cannot be thrown out at home, trailing 9–4." As usual, he was aggrieved by a bad play but not by a bad game. He never blames baseball.

A few days after this, I said to McCarver that this had felt like an old Mets game, back in one of their dreary stretches in the early nineties, and that I'd stayed with it to the end, as I so often did then, perhaps only because he was there.

"So much of a game comes from how it's told," McCarver said. "Rhythm and cadence are the key. Just in talking to your partner, you're telling your audience, 'I know what you're thinking.' You're saying this, and they're drawn in and complimented at the same time. You want to keep things simple for the ordinary listener and not annoy the hardened fan. If we're getting more sophisticated in delivering the game, it should become easier to understand." He paused, considering. "Sophisticated *is* simple," he said. ♦

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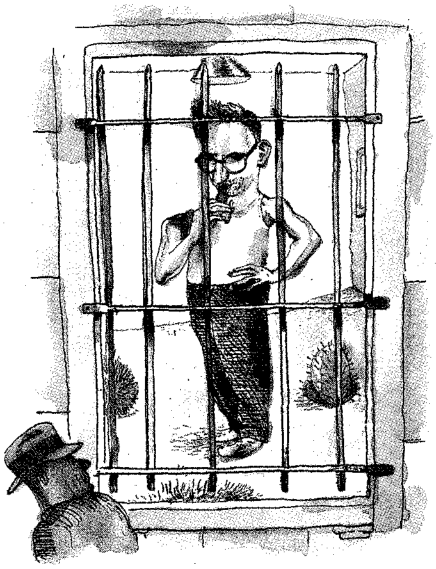
SHOUTS & MURMURS

REINTRODUCING ME TO MY HABITAT

BY JACK HANDEY



BARRY BLITT

I WOULD like to take this opportunity to urge conservation-minded people everywhere to pressure the government for the reintroduction of me to my native habitat.

My native habitat, of course, is the desert Southwest, where I used to roam wild and free. But, sadly, I no longer exist there. For several years, I have been largely confined to a small two-bedroom apartment in the Chelsea section of Manhattan.

It is clear that I do not belong here, as my neighbors will tell you. I am still frightened by car horns, and the fancy Eastern food I am fed is at odds with my natural diet of enchiladas and gingersnaps. Often I can be found pacing mindlessly back and forth in my cramped office, which I am told is a sign that I am insane.

Occasionally, there are scattered sightings of me in my old habitat—shooting a wet straw wrapper at someone's kid in a restaurant in Santa Fe, then denying it; doing my funny cowboy dance at a party in Silver City until people make me stop—but these cannot be confirmed.

For all intents and purposes, I have been eliminated from my former range, the Rio Grande Valley. I used to be found from El Paso and Juárez in the south all the way up to Taos and sometimes beyond (if I missed the turnoff to Taos).

Once, I filled a vital role in the ecosystem. I would prey primarily on the weak and the old, who were usually the only ones who would hire me. Then, when their businesses went under, they were removed from the system, as nature intended.

My world was in harmony. But then, as often happens, man intervened. Ranchers would drive me from their lands when they caught me throwing a keg-party barbecue, maybe using one of their cows. Divorce and job dismissals took their toll. I found I could not coexist with my creditors. At one point, public sentiment against me was so strong that I was considered "vermin" and a "pest."

But now, I think, attitudes are changing. People don't automatically want to shoot me, like they used to. This is mainly because of my reeducation efforts and because they haven't seen me for a long time.

The truth about me is finally starting to emerge. For instance, there is no record of me ever attacking a human, unless he was much, much smaller than me. The old myths are starting to die off, such as the one that if you leave your campsite unattended, I will sneak in and steal beer and food from your cooler and maybe knock down your tent.

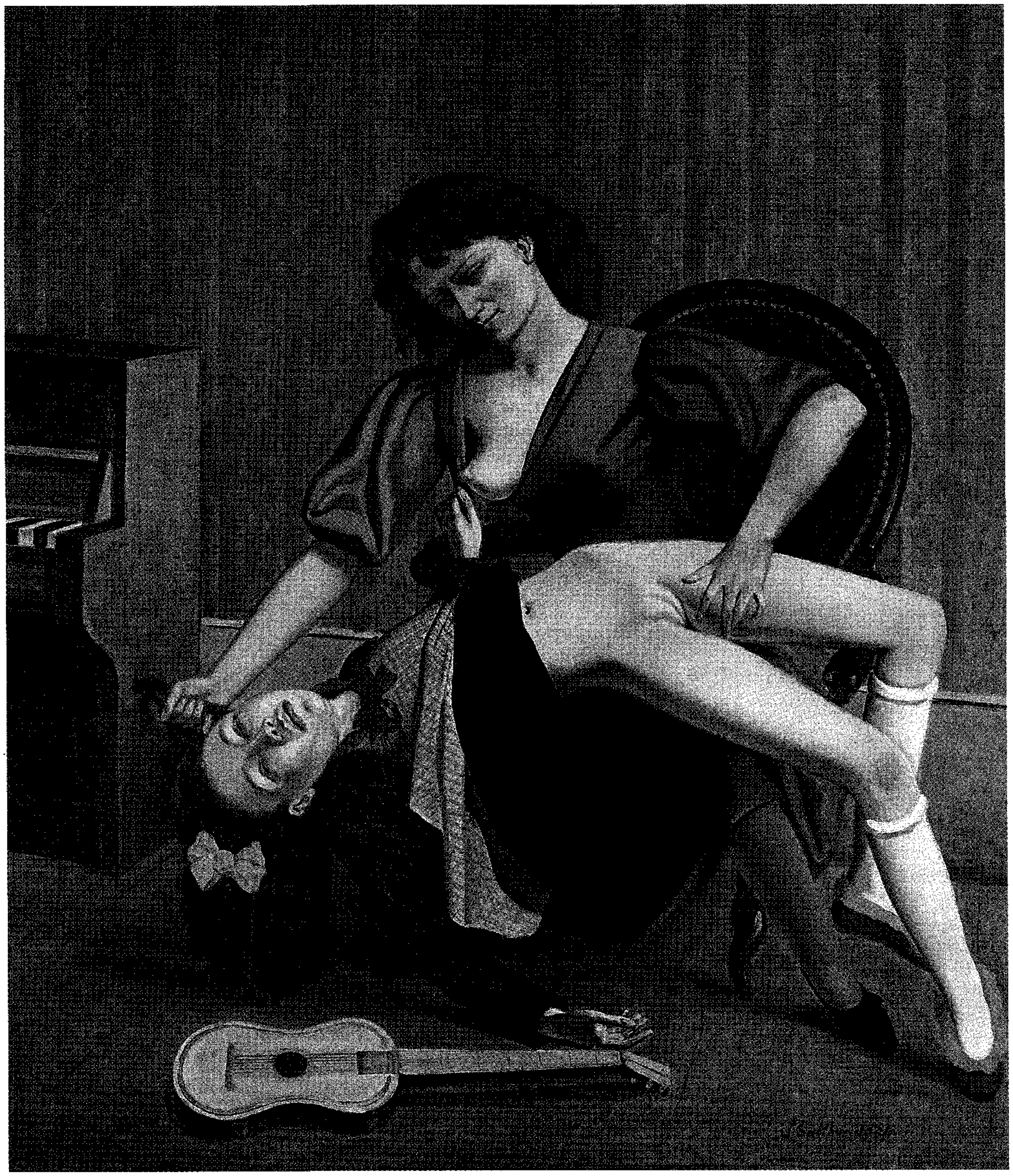
The time to act is now. I am not getting any younger, and my rent here in New York could go up at any time. Also, I could be wiped out by the stock market.

I have been conducting a captive-breeding program with my wife, but so far it has yielded no offspring. (The reason, I found out, is that my wife uses contraceptives, which I guess I knew.)

All of these factors make it imperative that you write the government and tell them to reintroduce me, via first-class airfare, to my old habitat. With a generous per diem and a late-model car, I think I could once again fill my old niche. I would probably try to mate with females of my species, unless my wife found out. And I would be willing to keep a journal of what I eat and what TV shows I watch, so that more may be learned about my ways.

I will, if necessary, wear a radio collar.

I am willing to do these things because I believe that until people can sit around a desert campfire and go "Shhh, hear that?" and then listen for the plaintive howl of me, we as a society have lost something. ♦



Balthus's controversial, rarely seen "The Guitar Lesson," 1934: Who is the victim and who is the victimizer?

INVESTIGATIONS

THE BALTHUS ENIGMA

What a scandalous painting reveals about the world's most elusive artist.

BY NICHOLAS FOX WEBER

WHEN Balthasar Klossowski turned six, he was given a birthday party in his family's apartment in Paris. Birthdays were a funny business for Balthus, as everyone called him. Because he had been born on February 29, 1908, his family did not know precisely when to celebrate, except in leap years. On this occasion, the boy anticipated his friends' arrival in unusually high spirits. He had a plan.

His home, which was in an apartment building on the Rue Boissonade, near the Boulevard du Montparnasse, was a cozy place, full of books and art. Balthus's parents were both artists—his father, Erich, was also an art historian—and their paintings were hung alongside canvases by Cézanne and Delacroix, and an assortment of Japanese woodcuts. At the appointed hour, Balthus's little friends arrived, dressed in their finery—"all very beautiful with their white lace collars," as he recalled. Once the governesses had left the children on their own, the birthday boy took charge. Balthus announced that the time had come for everyone to "eat badly." There was a chocolate cake, and they all plunged in. Everyone got his collar and cuffs filthy with frosting—everyone except Balthus, who remained spotless. When the governesses returned, the other children were severely chastised; only Balthus escaped punishment.

The story was told to me a lifetime later by the eighty-two-year-old Balthus—or the Count de Rola, as he now prefers to be called—in the sitting room of his eighteenth-century chalet in the small French-speaking village of Rossinière, in the Swiss Alps. He had been encouraged to tell me the tale by his much younger, Japanese-born wife, Setsuko, and when he finished it she said, "A very naughty boy, and until now he has never changed."

I had met both of them for the first time that afternoon. Although Balthus is famous for the care with which he has fashioned his image as the world's most elusive artist, he had invited me to Switzerland to talk about a book I was planning to write about him. On that first meeting, as we sat side by side on an eighteenth-century sofa, he was graciously forthcoming. Nonetheless, the story of his sixth birthday party, which he recounted with a grin, seemed a warning—his way of telling me that he was a master at getting others in trouble while keeping himself above the fray.

INITIALLY, Balthus had failed to answer the letter I'd sent him from my home in Connecticut. One morning in November, 1990, I steeled up the nerve to dial his phone number, having learned it from Swiss information. (It was listed under "Klossowski.") When a man with a gravelly, tremulous voice answered, I said, in my best high-school French, "*Est-ce que je peux parler avec le Comte de Rola?*"

"*C'est lui-même!*" the voice bellowed back.

Balthus immediately suggested that we switch to English. This, he said, was his first language—he was one-quarter Scottish and, as a child, had had a Scottish nanny. We fixed a date for my visit. I should have no trouble finding the house, he said. "It's the biggest in the village—the largest chalet in all of Switzerland," he added.

Three weeks later, I arrived at Le Grand Chalet, as it is called. This palatial residence, which was built between 1752 and 1756, contains forty-five rooms. It was converted into a hotel in the eighteen-fifties, and it was still an inn when Balthus and Setsuko bought it in the late nineteen-seventies.

A uniformed butler ushered me into an immense living room. The first thing I noticed was a framed photo of the young Balthus posed with his mother and her lover, the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, whom I knew to have been an important mentor to Balthus and his older brother, Pierre. None of Balthus's paintings were on view; in fact, the only recognizable piece of art was a small Bonnard lithograph. (Later, when I asked Balthus about the absence of his own work, he said, "I couldn't stand it. It would be too great a shock. I would think, 'Did I really make those mistakes?' ") Bibelots were carefully arranged on side tables; armchairs, upholstered in needlepoint, were placed for easy conversation. Around one corner I glimpsed what appeared to be a bust by Giacometti. I would have liked a better look at it, but I didn't want to be found snooping should Balthus suddenly appear.

Finally, about half an hour later, Balthus entered—a gaunt, lanky figure in a Japanese vest, a flannel shirt, and baggy tweed pants; he carried a cane, and he walked with a limp. "So here I am—a disabled old man," he said, smiling.

Life at Le Grand Chalet ran according to a strictly regimented schedule. That evening, promptly at five o'clock, I joined Balthus and Setsuko in the dining room, where we were served high tea from an ornate silver service. By the afternoon's end, I felt that I had been made privy to more information about Balthus's art and life than I could have hoped for. He reminisced about such old friends as Picasso and Ian Fleming. He cited his fondness for the paintings of Piero della Francesca and the stories of Edgar Allan Poe. Our rapport was facilitated by his perfect, idiomatic English, which he spoke with the accent of an Oxonian, although certain words took on a guttural German ring. I was dismayed, though, by his haggardness. Although Balthus's ornate vest might have been worn by an emperor, his other articles of clothing were frayed and tattered—as if he were too old to bother to replace them. His skin was unnaturally pale and translucent. He was animated, but he seemed to be hanging on to life.

I was invited to join Balthus and his wife that night for dinner. The butler—

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ANSWERS TO 8 X 10 CRYPTIC NO. 101

ACROSS

1	P + ROW
4	RODS (2 defs.)
8	LOTHARIO (anag.)
9	A + G(E)OLD
11	PEEK (*peak* hom.)
12	SENECA (anag.)
14	DUE + LED
16	EPIC (hidden)
19	A + FLO(A)T
20	PINNACLE (anag.)
21	A + RAB (rev.)
22	T(R)IP

DOWN

1	PLA + Y (*Alp* rev.)
2	RO(G)UES
3	W + HOLE
5	OR + DEALS
6	DI(V)E
7	SO + A + KED
10	IN + DI + ANA
12	SHERPA (anag.)
13	NEP + ALI (*pen* rev.)
15	E + CLAT (anag.)
17	P + AIR
18	STEP (hidden)

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VILLE ET VILLAGE

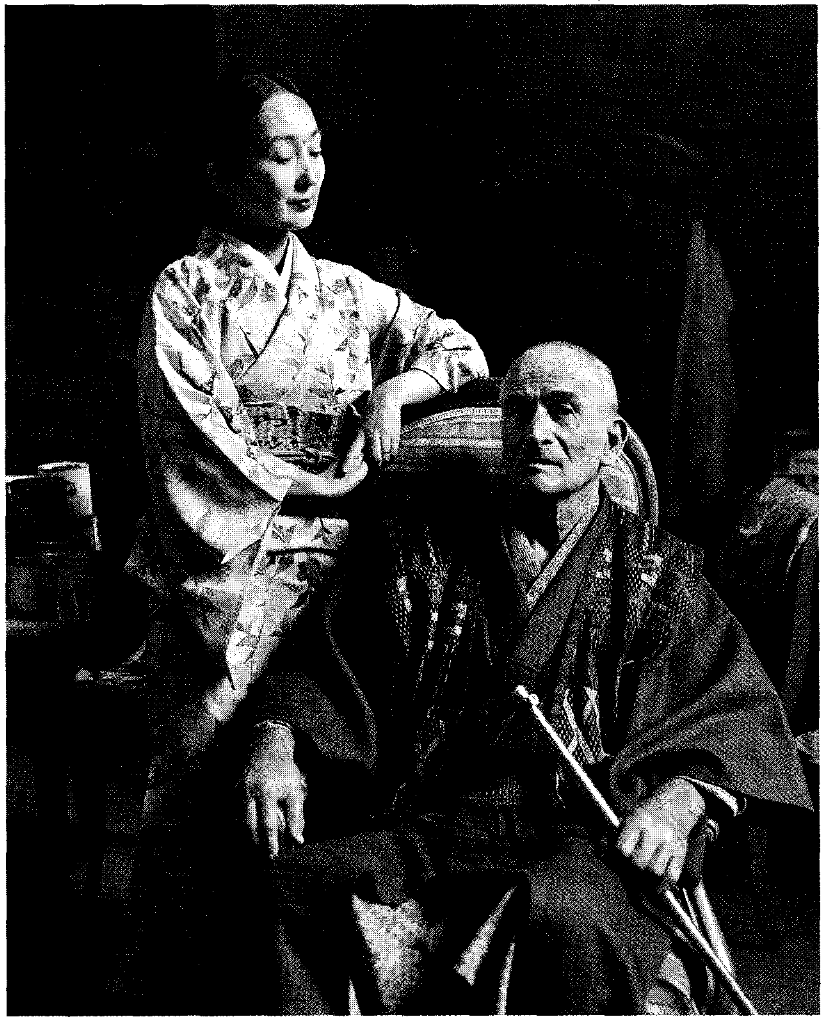
a Filipino whose name was Leonardo, much to his employer's delight—was now in white jacket and white gloves. Balthus was wearing an exquisitely tailored gray flannel suit with Edwardian-style lapels. The jacket cuffs were rolled up a turn, so that he seemed both formal and casual. Setsuko wore a gold brocade kimono, flecked in a deep red that matched her nail polish. Together they were an arresting composition: the broad planes of her cheeks in contrast to the sharp angles of his Voltairean profile.

Other dinner guests arrived—a jolly, white-haired English couple named Devenish; they were the former innkeepers from whom Balthus had bought Le Grand Chalet. We all had drinks in the living room, and from a large silver dish Setsuko offered pistachio nuts—"a gift from the Aga Khan," she said.

During the lengthy meal that followed—the menu at Le Grand Chalet was almost invariably bland nursery food prepared to soothe Balthus's fragile stomach—Mr. Devenish told me that when he and his wife sold their hotel to Balthus, they had no idea who he was. In fact, he said, for most of the thirteen years that Balthus had been in Rossinière, the local population simply thought that he was a retired businessman who painted as a hobby—until the recent appearance of an article about him in *Paris Match*. The only sombre note was struck by Balthus, who frequently referred to acquaintances who had died. After the mention of each name, he gave the person's age at the time of death, as if he were calculating how many more years he had left.

Balthus and I talked on and off over the next two days, after which he let me know that he looked forward to many more such conversations. I was thus taken aback, during my second visit, six weeks later, when he requested that my book include no biographical details about him. I said that although I understood that his paintings and his life were separate issues, the book would have to include elements of biography. I explained that I hoped to understand his point of view—not to establish spurious links between his personal history and his art. Balthus grinned mischievously. From then on, whenever he spoke of friends or personal experiences and saw that I was not jotting down notes he reminded me to take out my notebook so that he could debunk "the Balthus myth."

His art, he maintained, had been misunderstood: it was neither pornographic nor mysterious. Above all, it was not autobiographical. Invariably, he said, attempts to see his work that way had led to gross misreadings of it. For example, in talking about his 1933 painting "The Street," a Parisian scene in which nine colorfully clad people go about their separate lives, he pointed out that what had been widely described as a cardboard cutout figure in front of a bakery was not a shop sign at all but a real person. He went on, "And when people say that my characters are walking in their sleep, that's wrong." When I told him that a prominent New York collector described the ecstatic-looking woman in her large Balthus canvas as being in the throes of an orgasm, he roared. (On several occasions when visitors were present, he instructed me, "Nicholas, tell them the story about the rich American and my painting." When I finished the anecdote, he added, "Apparently, on Park Avenue they laugh when they are coming.") He reserved special scorn for a critic who wrote that Balthus had been deeply influenced by the art of Germany, during a youthful period spent in that country. He called the offending essay "a concentration of incorrect theories" that exemplified "the traps into which art historians fall," and insisted that, having lived in Germany for only a few months, he had little use for most German painting. In fact, Balthus spent a number of years in Berlin, as is documented in Rilke's correspondence with the painter's mother.


Balthus and his wife, Setsuko, photographed by Evelyn Hofer, in 1989: He is, she says, "a very naughty boy."

Balthus liked to cite a story about the Elizabethan essayist and philosopher Francis Bacon—"the real Francis Bacon," he said, to distinguish him from the English painter of the same name. Bacon, so the story went, had been writing a history of mankind when he happened to be standing at his window one day and witnessed, in the street, two people having a quarrel in which one of them was killed. Bacon had abandoned his history of mankind after learning that his version of the incident was entirely different from the versions given by other onlookers. To Balthus, the story was proof that when it comes to reconstructing the past there are no certainties.

BALTHUS is one of the great loners of twentieth-century art; he belongs to no school, no "ism," but his own. Beginning with his first solo exhibition, in 1934, in Paris, he has produced a rigorously controlled number of pictures, including landscapes, portraits, and tableaux of figures seized by sexual urges. These last compositions have established themselves as among the most disturbing and enigmatic images in modern art. For many years, every Balthus show, small or large, has been an event: his last retrospective in the United States, a survey of fifty-one paintings at the Met, in 1984, was one of the museum's most provocative exhibitions. Early in Balthus's career, his dealer had trouble finding buyers for his controversial works, and for many years Balthus struggled to make ends meet. For the past forty years, however, his relatively small output of paintings—they number scarcely more than three hundred and fifty—have fared extremely well on the art market; in recent years, the asking price has reportedly gone as high as $4.5 million (for the 1993 painting "Cat at the Mirror III").

In a preface to a 1949 exhibition catalogue, Albert Camus wrote that in a Balthus picture "the most ordinary reality can assume the unfamiliar, remote air, the soft resonance, the muffled mystery of a lost paradise." Painted in a manner that seems at once modern and Old Master-like, Balthus's figures are articulated with consummate technique, yet they are impossible to read with assurance: are they, in some instances, male or female, very old or still in childhood, predators or victims? Balthus, characteristically, casts his figures in poses of zombielike self-absorption. Teen-age boys, looking positively deranged but guiltless, zealously grope their female prey; girls spread their legs to show narrow strips of underwear at the crotches while remaining unaware that they are being viewed. Women assume the traditional Amazon stance—exposing one breast but not the other—to passers-by who seem oblivious of their immodesty.

As a painter, Balthus has borrowed heavily from Poussin, Hogarth, Seurat, and others, but his ideal has consistently been the Renaissance master Piero della Francesca, in part for the attributes best elucidated by Bernard Berenson:

> Piero . . . seems to have been opposed to the manifestation of feeling, and ready to go to any length to avoid it. . . . One is almost compelled to conclude that Piero was not interested in human beings as living animals, sentient and acting. For him they were existences in three dimensions whom perchance he would have gladly exchanged for pillars and arches, capitals, entablatures and facets of walls. . . . He paints what he cannot hope to realize, his dream of surroundings worthy of his mind and heart, where his soul would feel at home.

Balthus saw his first works by Piero—the frescoes in Arezzo—when he was eighteen. Afterward, he wrote to friends extolling the scenes for their balance of color and form, their precision and harmony.

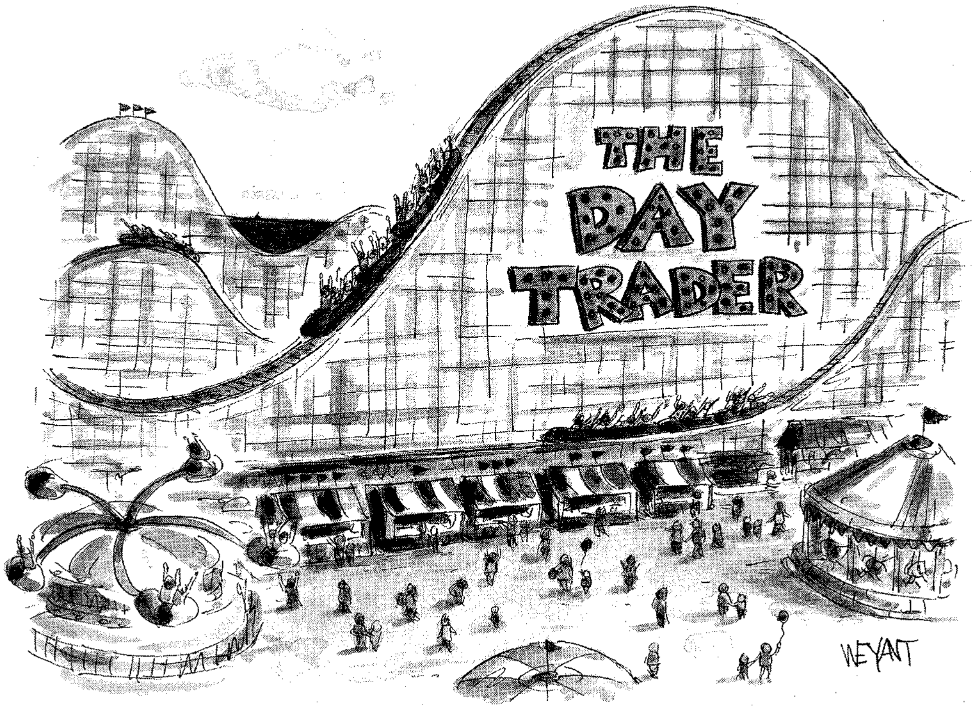
Balthus was also attracted to Piero because of the many biographical mysteries surrounding the artist. A lack of information about the creator makes people concentrate better on the art, Balthus frequently pointed out to me; after all, encounters with paintings are, first and foremost, visual experiences—not literary, historical, or psychological undertakings. Like many artists, Balthus deplores the reliance of museums on wall texts and audio devices that overload viewers with such irrelevant information as, say, who the painter's grandparents were. He insisted that I view his work purely and simply on the basis of how it looked—on what he himself had to "say," in the act of painting.

This is an appealing idea. Yet many of Balthus's paintings have provoked endless speculation about the man who painted them: the nature of his marriages (there have been two); his personal habits (even after he married, Balthus maintained relationships with a succession of younger women); his claims of noble ancestry; the opulence of his style of living. Given the presence of so many sexually alert children in his paintings, the most lurid conjecture is that he must be a pedophile. The facts, as I came to understand them in the course of my conversations with Balthus and numerous interviews with his friends and colleagues, are both considerably less certain and more complex.

IF one believes what Balthus has recently taken to telling people, there was, at the time of his birth in Paris, some confusion in the local registry office that prevented his parents from informing the authorities that his full name was Balthasar Klossowski de Rola and that he bore the hereditary title of Count. In any case, it was not until after the Second World War that he began referring to himself as Le Comte de Rola. Throughout Balthus's life, he has come up with some fantastic stories about his ancestry, and he has been remarkably successful in persuading the world of their validity. Cyril Connolly was one of several writers who declared Balthus to be a direct descendant of Lord Byron. Balthus has also convinced a number of journalists that he descends from the Romanovs and, through Stanislaw, the last King of Poland, from the royal Polish family of Poniatowski. It has been reported that he is the illegitimate son of Rilke.

In fact, the Klossowskis—his father's family—were of minor Polish nobility. His mother's family were prominent Jews from Breslau. In our conversations, Balthus repeatedly denied this aspect of his lineage, maintaining, at one point, that his mother came from a Protestant family in the South of France. When I asked him several years ago about a reference to his supposed Jewishness in a Metropolitan Museum catalogue, he said that he had not deigned to protest this mistake because, as he put it, "I have many Jewish friends—Yehudi Menuhin, for instance, who is one of the greatest men of our time—and the attitude would be misinterpreted." My research ultimately confirmed that there was no more truth to his claims about his mother's family than there was to his assertion that he was part Scottish.

Balthus also fabricated an idyllic upbringing. "I had a marvellous childhood, a wonderful childhood," he told me. His reminiscences were of luxurious houses and mountain holidays of unruffled bliss, but the reality was often otherwise. At the outbreak of the First World War, the Klossowskis' pleasant Parisian way of life came to an abrupt end. As German citizens, they were forced to leave France and obliged to live in a relative's



small apartment in Berlin. In 1917, the boy's parents, Erich and Baladine, separated, and Balthus, who was nine at the time, and his older brother, Pierre, went with their mother to live in Geneva. Shortly after they were settled in a modest flat, Baladine revived an old friendship with Rilke. It was the beginning of a contentious affair that lasted almost until the poet's death, seven years later. To me, Balthus always voiced the fondest memories of his parents, as well as Rilke. But Erich Klossowski's sons may well have sided, emotionally, with their absent father, who was, by all accounts, a highly cultivated, sympathetic man.

Rilke developed a profound attachment to both of Baladine's sons. Even as a teen-ager, Pierre was already a gifted writer and translator of sufficient talent that Rilke arranged for him to go to Paris under the guidance of André Gide. The poet seems to have had an even greater regard for Pierre's brother. When Balthus was twelve, he made forty drawings of the mysterious disappearance of a stray Angora cat that he had taken in. Rilke was so enchanted with the tale and the drawings that he composed a preface for a publication of them in a little volume entitled "Mitsou." The preface was an early appreciation of Balthus's sensibility and style. "Losing something living is death!" Rilke wrote. "Of course, you felt this, Balthus. No longer able to see Mitsou, you bent your efforts to seeing her even more clearly."

The atmosphere in Baladine's household was emotionally intense. A strong-minded, physically sturdy woman who was often overwhelmed by her passions, Baladine once wrote to Rilke that she and her sons were "like three children." But the family dynamics must have been exceedingly complex, and as the two brothers vied for the affection of a mother who was in the throes of a stormy romantic relationship they were already headed in different creative directions.

Rilke instilled in Balthus the idea that being an artist could provide an escape from the turbulence of life, and that ambiguousness, in art, was desirable. "My point of view is extremely vague," Balthus liked to say as he blew rings of cigarette smoke into the air. "I change my path every day. What I don't like to nail down is a conception." Nor did he like the idea of being credited with an influence—for example, the notion that the carpenter in "The Street" was inspired by a figure in one of Piero's frescoes. "Everyone has to be influenced by something," he declared with annoyance. "One painter painted with a brush, and so did another—there's an influence."

By the time Balthus was sixteen, Rilke again prevailed upon Gide—this time, to help the younger of Baladine's sons settle in Paris so that he could devote all of his energies to painting. Shunning art schools, Balthus taught himself to paint by copying Poussin at the Louvre and Piero, on his pilgrimage to Italy.

In the early nineteen-thirties, Balthus began to court Antoinette de Watteville, the daughter of a distinguished old Swiss family. To friends, he wrote that her mere presence overwhelmed him; with her fresh beauty and aristocratic bearing, she was his ideal woman. Unfortunately, Antoinette was engaged to another man; in any event, Balthus was socially and economically unacceptable to her family. Despite his evident despair, he continued to pursue her, and in 1937 they were married. Eventually, they set up residence in Switzerland, and in 1946, after Antoinette had given birth to two sons, they separated. Balthus returned to Paris, where he still had a studio on the Cour de Rohan. In 1966, he and Antoinette divorced so that Balthus could marry Setsuko, whom he had met during a trip to Japan, several years earlier.

BALTHUS'S first one-man show, in 1934, at the Galerie Pierre, a small showplace for Surrealism and other contemporary movements, was a *succès de scandale*. Four of the seven paintings on public display depicted sexual subject matter with more explicitness than even the most sophisticated gallery-goers were accustomed to. In "Alice," a woman faces us while her strapless slip falls below one of her voluminous bare breasts; the binding undergarment is so short that her labia bulge, visibly, beneath the hem. An erotic force envelops us, yet the woman seems deep in reverie—entirely uninterested in her impact.

In "The Window," the female subject again has her left breast bared and the right one clad, but this time she is a victim; with her right hand raised in frightened defiance, she has apparently had her dress pulled down and been forced to the edge of a high, open window. "Cathy Dressing" portrays a woman who is brazen, powerful, and dominant—fully aware of the allure of her milky flesh and unabashed sexuality. She stands in brilliantly lit counterpoint to her dour maid and to a sombre man—recognizable as Balthus himself—who sits, hunched and brooding, in shadow.

The largest painting in the show—"The Street"—depicted the obliviousness of ordinary Parisians to a sexual assault in which a girl in a red cardigan has been groped by a demonic-looking boy who has come upon her from behind and hiked up her skirt. (The painting is now in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, having been sanitized by Balthus in the nineteen-fifties to make it presentable to the American public.) A fifth painting, "The Guitar Lesson," was kept in a back room at the Galerie Pierre, because it was considered too sexually violent for the general public.

Although the show inspired few reviews or sales, its shock value—and, for a few discerning viewers, the sheer artistry of the painting—gave Balthus the attention he craved. The canvases provoked enthusiastic commentary from writers as influential as Pierre-Jean Jouve and Antonin Artaud. Balthus soon became friendly with many of the leading modernists in Paris—among them Picasso, Miró, Giacometti, and André Derain—as well as a regular in the celebrated avant-garde salon of Marie-Laure de Noailles.

THE most provocative painting at the Galerie Pierre was "The Guitar Lesson," which has remained something of a peepshow curiosity ever since it was first shown—under wraps, at the artist's insistence. This large (64" x 55") canvas depicts a bizarre encounter between a young woman, who appears to be in her twenties, and a girl who looks to be around twelve. A guitar is lying on the floor; a piano is glimpsed in the background. Apparently, a music lesson has just been interrupted. The teacher has thrown her pupil across her lap and pulled her dress up over her navel. With her right hand, the instructress yanks her victim's long, flowing hair while digging the talonlike fingers of her other hand into the girl's thigh, just below the vulva.

Stunned though the girl seems to be, she is far from passive. With one hand,

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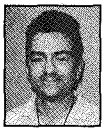

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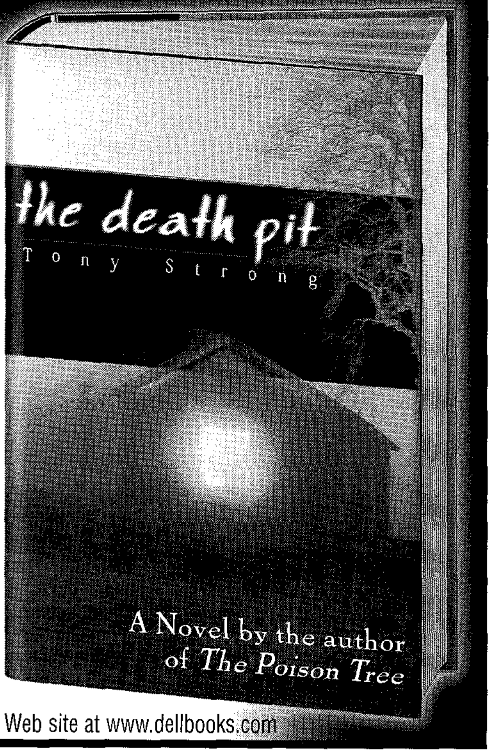

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she has grabbed her tormentor's dress by the neckline and pulled it down to expose one of the older woman's breasts. The configuration recalls any number of Renaissance arrangements of the Madonna and Child—but as a savage mockery of that iconography. "The Guitar Lesson" invests sacred imagery with an unabashed sadomasochism that is virtually unprecedented in the history of art. On an aesthetic level, the painting is masterly. The figures are charged with tension and vitality; the claustrophobic space reads with startling clarity. The stuff of bourgeois living—striped wallpaper, soft upholstery fabrics—is rendered with the richness and authority of an Ingres.

Balthus once told me that he had conceived of "The Guitar Lesson" simply as a way of attracting attention to himself. In this regard, he succeeded, even though, in the sixty-five years since its first showing, the canvas has been displayed to the general public for only one month—and that, more than twenty years ago.

In the late nineteen-thirties, the adventurous Paris dealer Pierre Colle sold "The Guitar Lesson" to James Thrall Soby, who had already acquired "The Street," for his pioneering modernist collection in Farmington, Connecticut. Subsequently, "The Guitar Lesson" was not shown when Soby's collection went on display at the Wadsworth Atheneum, in Hartford. Soby never mentioned the painting in his extensive writings on Balthus; nor did he hang it even in the privacy of his own home. Until 1945, when "The Guitar Lesson" was acquired by the Surrealist painter Matta in a swap for one of Matta's own works, it remained out of sight in a storage vault. A few years later, when Matta's former wife, Patricia Echaurren, married the New York dealer Pierre Matisse, the painting became a part of the Matisse gallery's collection. There it remained, unseen by the public, for the next three decades. In 1977, Matisse included the painting in a Balthus exhibition, in his gallery on Fifty-seventh Street. Although "The Guitar Lesson" received considerable media coverage, no mainstream publication dared reproduce it. The critic Thomas B. Hess felt obliged to offer an apology: "I dwell at some length on 'The Guitar Lesson,' even though it can't be illustrated in the pages of *New York*."

A year later, Pierre Matisse offered to donate the painting to the Museum of Modern Art, but, after keeping it in storage for almost five years, MOMA returned the painting to the dealer in 1983. The gift was refused after the museum's president, Blanchette Rockefeller, found it too obscene for public viewing. The following year, "The Guitar Lesson" was notably absent from a major Balthus retrospective in the Centre Pompidou. *Le Monde* reported that it had been left out of the show at the artist's insistence; the article quoted Balthus as saying that he regarded the work as "an initiatory painting reserved for the eyes of a small élite."

WHEN I first asked Balthus about the whereabouts of "The Guitar Lesson," he told me that he had no idea. But several days later he admitted that he had heard various rumors as to the identity of its present owner. Squinting his eyes, he strained to remember: oh, yes, it had recently come up for sale in Switzerland, after "some film person" had owned it—he couldn't recall the name. I suggested Mike Nichols, because I knew that the director owned other Balthus paintings. Balthus looked puzzled and asked whether there wasn't "also a Nicholson"—a reference to another well-known Hollywood art collector, Jack Nicholson. It was one of many occasions when I felt that Balthus knew more than he was letting on.

In our next conversation, Balthus recalled quite a bit more. He said that the canvas "might belong" to "a Greek shipping magnate" whose name he could not remember.

Then, a few mornings later, Balthus delightedly named the owner of "The Guitar Lesson." What a coup—his expression seemed to say—that a painting he had done when he could barely afford the rent of his one-room studio was now treasured by someone of such prominence.

It was Maria-Gaetana Matisse, Pierre's widow, who, with Balthus's blessing, arranged for me to see "The Guitar Lesson" a few months later. She did so on the condition that I not divulge the owner's identity or the painting's location.

"The Guitar Lesson" was on an upper floor of an apartment building on Fifth Avenue. Emerging from an elevator, I was greeted by a young man, an employee of the painting's owner. He led me down a series of corridors at such a pace that I could catch only glimpses of the extraordinary art in the chambers we passed: an El Greco; several Courbets; a few Cézannes; a large, early Matisse.

Finally, we came to an elaborately panelled bedroom furnished in the period of Versailles. Under a coffered

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NOT KNOWING THE WORDS

Before he wearied of the task, he sang a nightly Mass
for the repose of the souls of the faithful departed
and magicked his blood to bourbon and tears
over the ring, the lock of hair, the dry pink dentures.
Was he talking to her? I never learned.
Walk in, he'd pretend to be humming, softly,
like wind through a window frame.

The last I saw of him alive, he pressed me to his coat.
It stinks in a sack in my attic like a drowned Alsatian.
It's his silence. Am I talking to him now, as I get it out
and pull its damp night about my shoulders?
Shall I take up the task, and fill its tweedy skin?
Do I stand here not knowing the words
when someone walks in?

—Michael Donaghy

ceiling, "The Guitar Lesson" hung in a sleeping alcove so that it could be viewed from a large, canopied bed. On the facing wall hung a Modigliani portrait of a long-necked woman; her dissolute expression suggested that she might have been drugged into a stupor by the Balthus. A butler arrived to serve me a cappuccino. Over the next two hours, I had "The Guitar Lesson" to myself.

For two years, I honored the terms of my agreement and told nobody about the painting's ownership or where it was located. I felt duped, therefore, when, in January, 1994, an article about Balthus in the *Times Magazine*, written by Ted Morgan, reported that "The Guitar Lesson" was to be found in the collection of the Greek shipping tycoon Stavros Niarchos.

In one of our conversations, Balthus said that he was sorry he had ever painted "The Guitar Lesson." It had generated too many misconceptions, he explained. In any case, he now regarded it as more of a youthful prank than a serious work of art. However, the more I looked at "The Guitar Lesson," the more I came to see it as perhaps the most self-revealing—if enigmatic—work in Balthus's long career.

The girl in the painting clutches at the neckline of the teacher's dress. In doing so, she turns the gray satin of the garment into a sort of sling that cradles the older woman's aroused breast. Is the child making a desperate attempt to keep from falling to the floor? Or is she deliberately denuding the teacher? In any event, Balthus has seen to it that the specifics of her emotions remain inaccessible to us. Like many of his characters, she appears trapped somewhere between misery and ecstasy—alarmed, but also transfixed.

The teacher, too, is a study in contradictions. Her face is a mixture of rapture and scorn. Although she contemplates her prey with relish, she also seems preoccupied by something else. And is she seducing the girl or chastising her? Is this an act of punishment for the child's sexual impulses? Again, although various conflicting scenarios present themselves, the truth stays just out of reach.

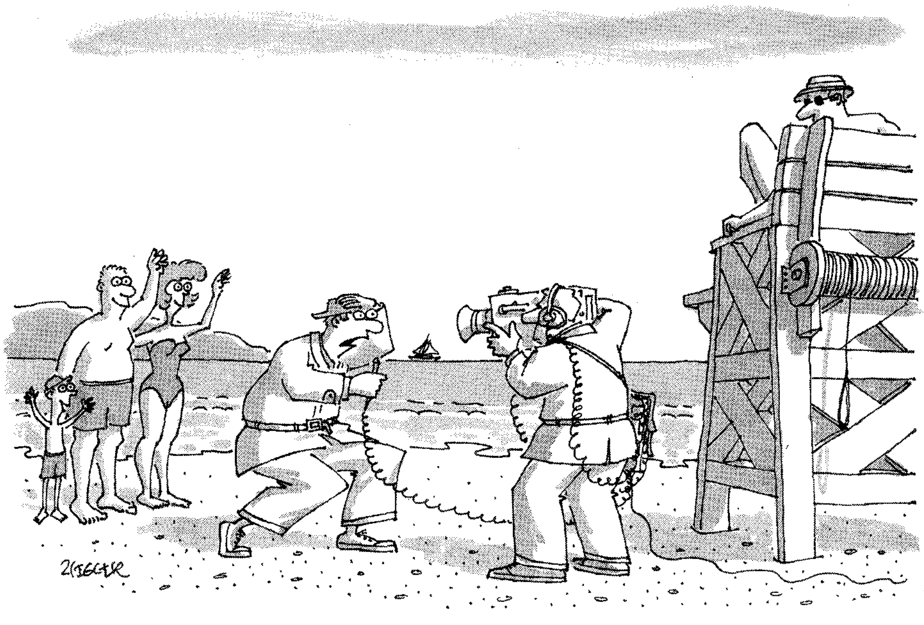
I reminded myself of what Balthus had insisted about the painting's intentions: "What people tell you is quite the contrary of what I thought. Of course, the subject has something provocative about it, but when I painted it my main effort was just to make a painting of it." I also recalled that, in a separate conversation about another, more mature masterpiece, Balthus had suggested that a psychological interpretation was indeed valid. In talking about a painting of the early fifties entitled "The Room," which shows a reclining naked woman illuminated by a shaft of light from a window whose curtain has been pulled back by a bizarre, dwarflike figure, Balthus told me that his underlying aim was to suggest "a general awakening—a becoming aware of things."

A similar reading, it seemed to me, could apply to "The Guitar Lesson." For, whatever else might be said about the painting, both the teacher and her pupil are almost frighteningly alive in the moment. Balthus has made desire and fear as palpable as the figures' bones and skin. In his later paintings, the sexually charged characters would seem anesthetized in their ambiguities. Here they are wide awake.

In the end, what struck me most forcibly in the Niarchos bedroom was that the artist I was coming to know seemed unmistakably like the music teacher: audacious in his daring and imperious in his determination to dominate—to control the situation. "It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors," Oscar Wilde wrote in his preface to "The Picture of Dorian Gray." So Balthus had claimed to me time and again. But when I emerged from my solitary viewing of "The Guitar Lesson" I was convinced that the music teacher was Balthus himself—a self-portrait in drag.

Confronted by Balthus's refusal to admit to any autobiographical underpinnings in his work, I felt impelled to do some detective work—to turn up every witness and possible clue that I could find. Fifteen years after he painted "The Guitar Lesson," Balthus made a study of the work in pencil, in which the dominating teacher is replaced by a squinting portrait of the painter himself. Could the drawing have been a not-so-veiled acknowledgment of the earlier work's real subject matter?

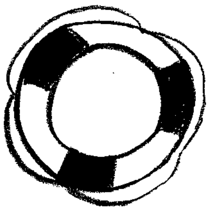
And, apart from the obvious differences in age, there were marked physical and psychological similarities between the man I had come to know and the woman in the earlier painting. There, in the violent seductress, was Balthus's pointed chin, sharp jaw, large narrow nose, strong cheekbones, and thin lips. Her eyes had the same cattish squint as his. Her skin had the same waxy pallor. Moreover, the music teacher seemed imbued with the driving characteristics of Balthus's personality: she was intense, mischievous, domineering, irresistible. She was



"The relatively placid seas and those vacationers behind me notwithstanding, Dan, it's really starting to blow out here."

clearly someone who was able to make the recipient of her charms submit with minimal resistance—and to enjoy the submission.

The music teacher also betrays some of the masked tension that I sensed in Balthus whenever I inquired about personal wellsprings in his art. Having got where she is by her own devices, she nonetheless seems unhappy about it. Perhaps shame and guilt accompany her sadism; indeed, she may be as masochistic and self-punishing as she is hedonistic and commanding.



Several of the artist's boyhood photographs, which show him with his mother and Rilke, also suggested another portrait at work in the figure of the music teacher—that of Baladine Klossowska. In those photographs, mother and son appear strikingly alike in the prominence of their noses, their thin mouths, deep-set eyes, and hollow cheeks; even their hair—worn at pageboy length—is similar. Was the teacher an amalgam of the artist and his mother? Several years after my visit to the Niarchos apartment, a noted Balthus scholar, Sabine Rewald, offered a similar argument in *Art in America* and suggested that, in the painting's likeness between the music teacher and Baladine, Balthus was making "a parody of Freudian symbolism."

Indeed, a fascination with psychological complexity reigned in the cultural and intellectual milieu in which "The Guitar Lesson" was painted. One of Balthus's close friends in the early thirties was the playwright Antonin Artaud, whose work was devoted to exploring the depths of human anguish. Balthus, in those days, was also surrounded by ardent Freudians—among them his brother Pierre—who were deeply caught up in the issues of buried power relationships between children and parents and the imperative of bringing them to the surface.

Yet, in my experience with Balthus, he evinced the most vehement aversion to the notion of investigating one's private emotions and feelings. How often did I hear Balthus say, "Psychoanalysis is the curse of modern thought?" And his variation on the theme: "The problem is that everyone sees eroticism. My pictures aren't erotic. The problem is psychoanalysis."

The year before Balthus painted "The Guitar Lesson," his brother Pierre wrote an essay entitled "Elements of a Psychoanalytic Study of the Marquis de Sade" for the *Revue Française de Psychanalyse*, a publication endorsed by Freud. In the essay, Pierre developed the idea of "the reverse Oedipus complex." To illustrate his theory, he explored the psychological dimensions of a "hypothetical" family that resembled, to a remarkable degree, his own: when a father is absent, he wrote, the son or sons will identify with him and come to treat the mother as a kind of "*idole tyrannique*." When I asked Balthus about his brother's theories, he laughed. "Poor Pierre," he said. "The concerns of an artist are visual, not psychological."

Nonetheless, "The Guitar Lesson" provides an almost textbook illustration of a key tenet of psychoanalytic thinking—the link between wish fulfillment and punishment; the teacher both introduces the girl to pleasure and takes her over her knee for it. Beginning with "The Guitar Lesson," Balthus injected a note of guilt into his erotically charged paintings. Sex was naughty, pleasure and pain were coexistent; the state of arousal was close to demonic.

IN my attempt to solve the riddles that faced me, I felt that I might get closer to the truth about Balthus by talking to some of the women who had been his subjects. I was fortunate enough to meet three of his models from the thirties. What emerged from them was the sense that Balthus had been both kind and cruel, and that he had used them as spurs to his fantasies. Betty Leyris, who had posed in 1933 for the lubricious "Alice," told me that she and Baladine Klossowska were similar body types, and that Balthus had given her powerhouse limbs like his mother's. An American woman, Jane Cooley Allen, recalled the torture of sitting for Balthus on her honeymoon to Paris in 1937; the artist had positioned her at the edge of a table and insisted that she not alter the angle of her back by so much as half an inch, even though she told him that the pain was excruciating. Only when she revealed that she was pregnant did he relent and tend to her comfort. Joan Miró's daughter, Dolores, who sat for Balthus in the same year, when she was eight, remembered only barbarity. She demonstrated to me the way Balthus had made her put her feet against nails that he had pounded into the floor, and she said she was terrified when he told her that if she changed positions he would hang her out the window in a cloth sack.

In the early fifties, Balthus made a series of exceptionally luminous paintings and drawings of the three adolescent daughters of the art dealer Pierre Colle. The middle sister, Béatrice Colle Saalburg, agreed to meet with me in Paris. "We felt fear and admiration for Balthus," she recalled. "He was someone one could not forget—fascinating, a bit animal. He dominated the situation."

When I brought up the subject of the painter's reluctance to admit to personal meanings in his work, she smiled. "Yes," she said. "He is someone who sometimes escapes, who avoids things. When he sees a problem, he runs around it. He doesn't always face a situation."

I mentioned that Balthus had told me how sorry he was that he'd ever painted "The Guitar Lesson." It had occurred to me that he felt this way because the painting was so personal.

Mme. Saalburg nodded. "The painting is different," she said. "In Balthus's other work, he was always gazing at the world as an outsider, like a cat—always a little bit secretive. 'The Guitar Lesson,' however, is the real one. The painting troubles him now because it is too honest."

THE last time I saw Balthus was in the spring of 1993, at Le Grand Chalet, the day after the opening of a major exhibition of his work in Lausanne. As we were standing in the garden, I again brought up "The Guitar Lesson." Speaking like an old friend, he inquired warmly about my family and the progress of the book. By now, I should have been able to ask him about my hunch that "The Guitar Lesson" was a self-portrait. But as I listened to Balthus saying, once again, how much he regretted having painted the picture that had stirred up so much trouble, I knew that I could not. To try to get behind that mask would only have broken the spell. ◆

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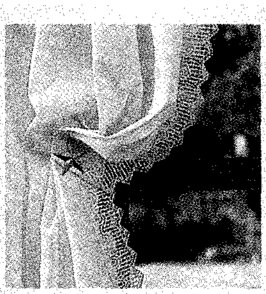

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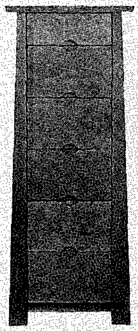

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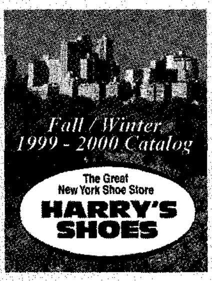

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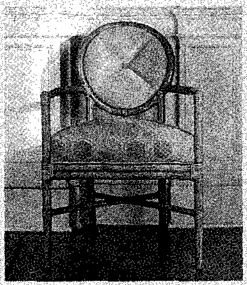

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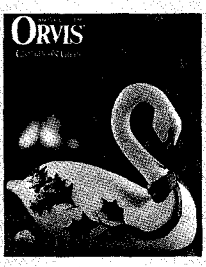

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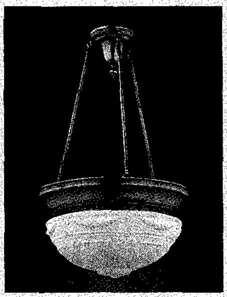

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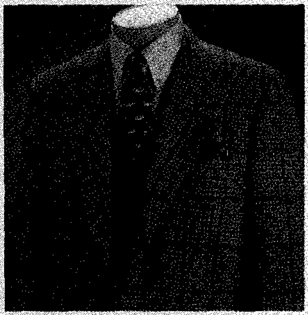

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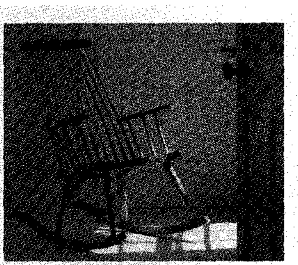

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PROFILE

THE DANGEROUS PHILOSOPHER

Peter Singer's belief that animals should be treated like people gave birth to the animal-rights movement. Does he also think that people should be treated like animals?

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

IT has been ten years since the breezy April afternoon when ninety-six British football fans were crushed to death at Hillsborough Stadium, in Sheffield, England. There was an important playoff match scheduled that day, between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest, but as more and more people crammed themselves onto one of the runways leading to the stands the crowd panicked. The final victim, a seventeen-year-old named Tony Bland, didn't die at Hillsborough—at least, not technically. But he was trampled so badly that his chest caved in and his lungs collapsed. Cut off from its oxygen supply, his cerebral cortex was destroyed within minutes. Four years later, this is how Lord Justice Hoffman described the young man's condition:

> Since April 15, 1989, Anthony Bland has been in persistent vegetative state. He lies in Airedale General Hospital . . . fed liquid food by a pump through a tube passing though his nose. . . . His bladder is emptied through a catheter. . . . Reflex movements in the throat cause him to vomit and dribble. Of all this . . . Anthony Bland has no consciousness at all. The parts of his brain that provided him with consciousness have turned to fluid. The darkness and oblivion which descended at Hillsborough will never depart. His body is alive, but he has no life in the sense that even the most pitifully handicapped but conscious human being has a life. But the advances of modern medicine permit him to be kept in this state for years, even perhaps for decades.

The justices decided not to let that happen. When they ruled, on February 4, 1993, that doctors could remove the feeding tubes and let Bland die, Britain's highest court made a reasoned decision to kill an innocent human being. Many people were outraged, but the Australian ethicist Peter Singer was not among them; in fact, Singer has argued for many years that euthanasia and infanticide are obvious necessities of the modern world. He wrote that the court's decision reflected "major shifts deep in the bedrock of western ethics," because Bland's death represented the collapse of a two-thousand-year-old system of values—one that had enshrined the sanctity of human life, no matter how compromised.

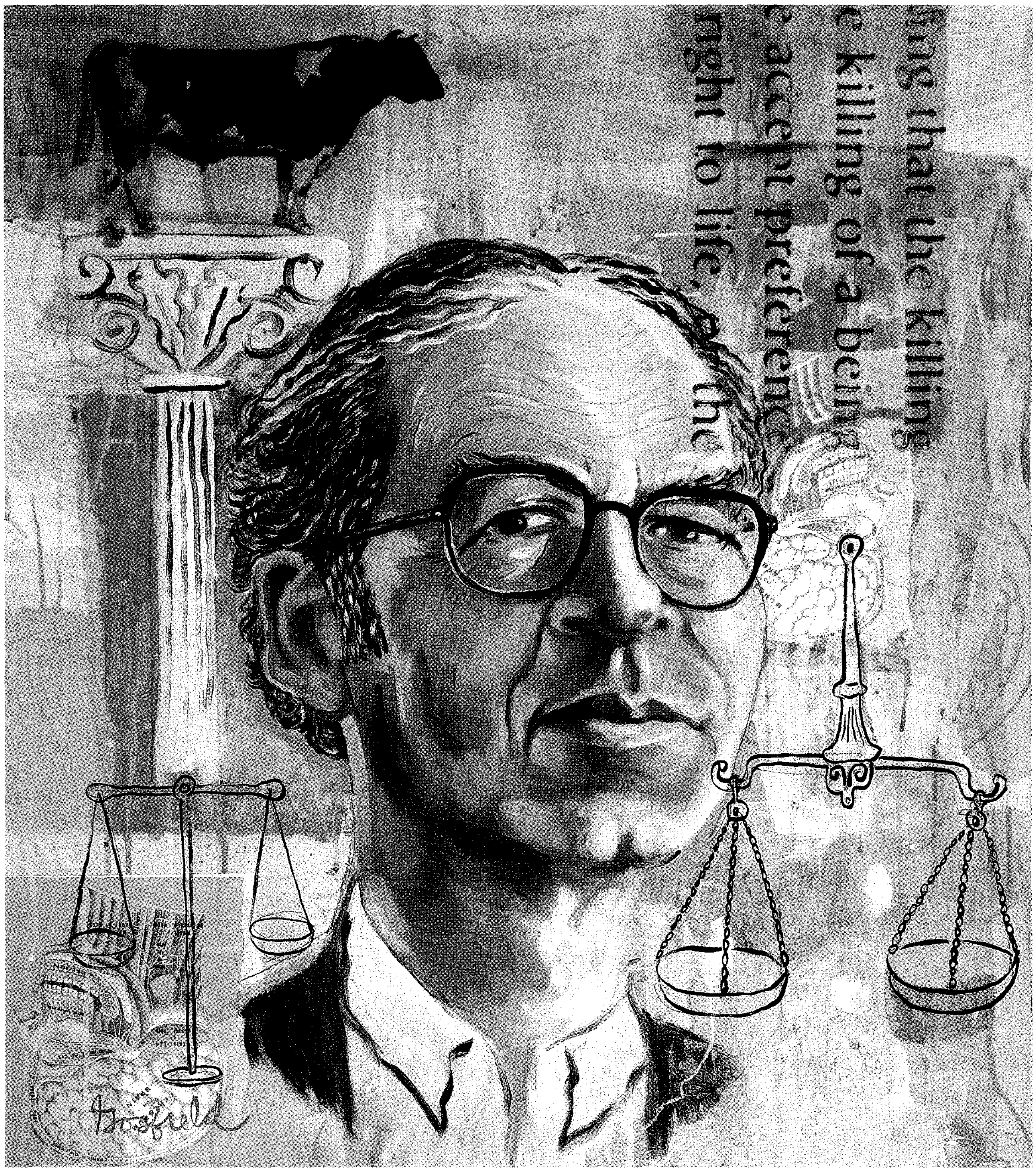
"The day had to come, just as the day had to come when Copernicus proved that the earth is not at the center of the universe," Singer told me not long ago. We were flying from Melbourne, where he lived, to Sydney, where he was to present a paper at a conference on reproductive genetics. "It is ridiculous to pretend that the old ethics still make sense when plainly they do not." Singer is a lean, rangy fifty-three-year-old, with a broad forehead and a ring of hair around his balding head which shoots in wisps straight into the air. He has a rich, deep baritone voice, but he doesn't like to use it; his words were so often drowned out by the drone of the jet engines that I had to ask more than once if he would mind speaking up.

"The notion that human life is sacred just because it's human life is medieval," he continued, talking about the treatment of the hopelessly ill. "The person that used to be there is gone. It doesn't matter how sad it makes us. All I am saying is that it's time to stop pretending that the world is not the way we know it to be."

PETER SINGER may be the most controversial philosopher alive; he is certainly among the most influential. And this month, as he begins a new job as Princeton University's first professor of bioethics, his unorthodox views will be debated in America more passionately than ever before. For nearly thirty years, Singer has written with great severity on subjects ranging from what people should put on their dinner plates each night to how they should spend their money or assess the value of human life. He is always relevant, but what he has to say often seems outrageous: Singer believes, for example, that a human's life is not necessarily more sacred than a dog's, and that it might be more compassionate to carry out medical experiments on hopelessly disabled, unconscious orphans than on perfectly healthy rats. Yet his books are far more popular than those of any other modern philosopher. "Animal Liberation," which was first published in 1975, has sold half a million copies and is widely regarded as the touchstone of the animal-rights movement. In 1979, he brought out "Practical Ethics," which has sold more than a hundred and twenty thousand copies, making it the most successful philosophy text ever published by Cambridge University Press.

Singer laid out his brutally frank approach to ethics in his first major paper, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," which has become required reading for thousands of university students. "As I write this in November 1971, people are dying in East Bengal from lack of food, shelter, and medical care," Singer's essay began. "The suffering and death that are occurring there now are not inevitable, not unavoidable." The problem, he explained, is a result of the moral blindness of rich human beings who are far too selfish to come to the aid of the poor.

Following in the tradition of the eighteenth-century moral philosopher William Godwin—who asked, famously, "What magic is there in the pronoun 'my' to overturn the decisions of everlasting truth?"—Singer argues that proximity means nothing when it comes to moral decisions, and that personal relationships don't mean much, either. Saving your daughter's life is a



Singer says, "It's time to stop pretending that the world is not the way we know it to be."

JOSH GOSFIELD

fine thing to do, for example, but it can never measure up to saving the lives of ten strangers. If you were faced with the choice, Singer's ethics would require you to save the strangers. "It makes no moral difference whether the person I can help is a neighbor's child ten yards from me or a Bengali whose name I shall never know, ten thousand miles away," he wrote in his essay. Singer believes we are obliged to give money away until our sacrifice is of "comparable moral importance" to the agony of people starving to death. "This would mean, of course," he continued, approvingly, "that one would reduce oneself to very near the material circumstances of a Bengali refugee."

Singer's views on animal rights are even bolder: he calls man's dominion over other animals a "speciesist" outrage that can properly be compared only to the pain and suffering "which resulted from the centuries of tyranny by white humans over black humans." For Singer, that "tyranny" is one of the central social issues of our age. Yet what has brought him infamy is his radical position on an even more compelling set of moral questions: how to cope with the borders between birth, life, and death in an era when we are becoming technologically capable of controlling them all.

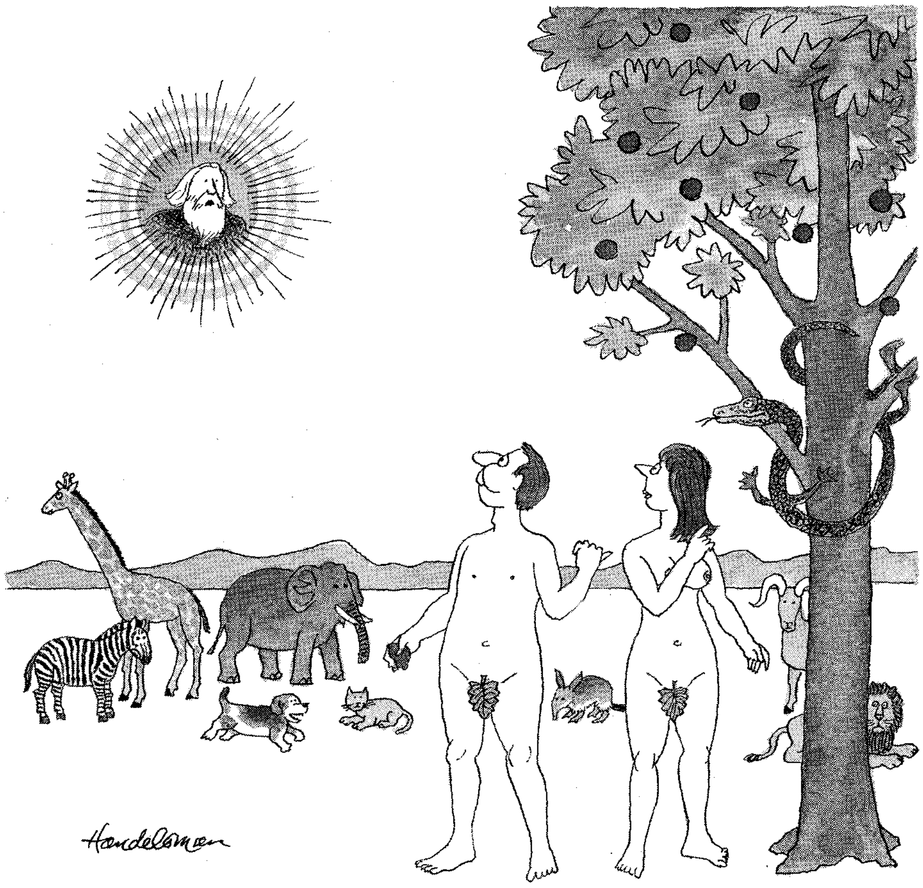
Singer's beliefs have led him places where few others are willing to go. He has suggested, for example, that parents who give birth to a hemophiliac might be better off killing it, especially if they could replace that dead infant with one who would be "likely to have a better life." Singer often complains, with justification, that his comments on such issues are exaggerated and taken out of context. So it might be best to let him present the argument himself:

> When the death of a disabled infant will lead to the birth of another infant with better prospects of a happy life, the total amount of happiness will be greater if the disabled infant is killed. The loss of happy life for the first infant is outweighed by the gain of a happier life for the second. Therefore, if killing the hemophiliac infant has no adverse effect on others, it would, according to the total view, be right to kill him.

Few people will ever consider infants replaceable in the way that they consider free-range chickens replaceable, and Singer knows that. Yet many of those who would never act on his conclusions still agree that if an infant really had no hope of happiness, death would be more merciful than a life governed by misery.

SINGER'S philosophy is a contemporary version of utilitarianism, and its basic intellectual weaponry rests on a simple thought crafted by Jeremy Bentham, in the nineteenth century: all sentient creatures have an interest in avoiding pain. Bentham lived in a newly industrial England—a place where six-year-olds worked, suffered, and died in hellish factories owned by people who were becoming indescribably rich. He established the first, essential principle of his new philosophy with the formula "each to count for one and none for more than one"; in other words, the happiness of any one person is no more important than the happiness of another. It was a revolutionary idea, and in 1861 John Stuart Mill elaborated on it in "Utilitarianism": humanity should strive for the greatest possible happiness for the greatest number of people.

Singer studied at Oxford with R. M. Hare—perhaps the most important twentieth-century descendant of Bentham and Mill—and his philosophy is called preference-utilitarianism. It is a more nuanced version of what Mill had in mind, with personal preferences taking the place of happiness. Singer's thought is shaped by the assumption that the results of your behavior should agree with the preferences of anyone whom your behavior would affect. For Singer, killing is wrong because when you kill someone who wants to live you make it impossible for that person to fulfill his preferences. Obviously, if you kill somebody whose preferences don't have much chance of success—a severely disabled infant, for example, or somebody in an advanced stage of Alzheimer's disease—the moral equation becomes entirely different.

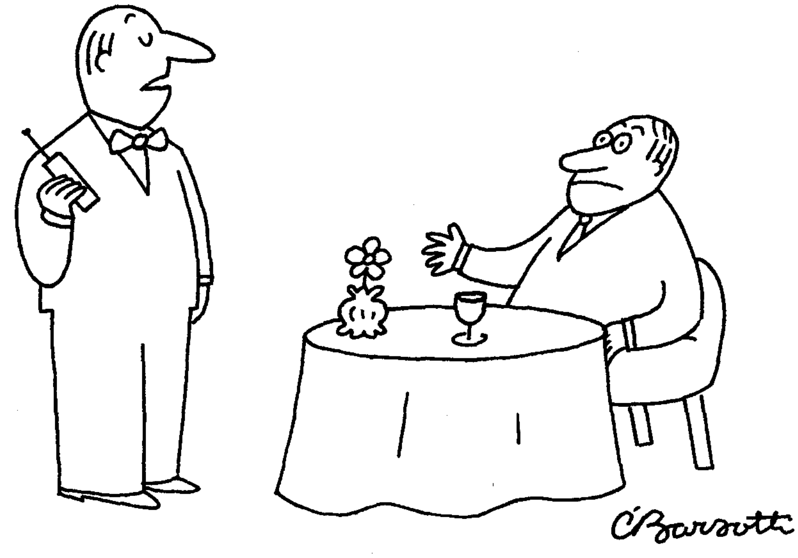


"So it's a case of he said, she said, it said."

Singer uses the word "person" to refer to self-conscious creatures: animals often fit that definition, and many humans do not. So when Singer says that you are more likely to do moral harm by killing a healthy cow than by killing a severely handicapped infant he means that the cow is more likely to anticipate pain and suffer from it than would the child. Singer believes that even relatively dumb animals—a chicken, for instance, or a mouse—deserve to be protected from unnecessary pain. And the more an animal is able to suffer and understand its surroundings, the more consideration it ought to be given. But he also believes the opposite—that any animal that has no hope of becoming self-aware has no hope of becoming a person. This is the reasoning that permitted Singer to write, in words that are almost always quoted out of context to portray him as evil or irrational, "Killing a disabled infant is not morally equivalent to killing a person. Very often it is not wrong at all."

Singer relies on a principle he calls "equal consideration of interests" to acknowledge the differences among species while still valuing all of them. Equal consideration and equal rights are not the same, though. For Singer, consideration varies with the complexity of the creature. So he would never say that since neither a baby nor a kitten is a person it doesn't matter which one you rescue from a burning house. You ought to save the baby. But equal consideration is his version of the Golden Rule, and he uses it to question the traditional distinctions between humans and other animals.

You don't need to suffer from existential doubt to be miserable: the anguish of a pig that lives only to be confined and then butchered counts as suffering to Singer in just the same way that human anxiety does. Singer says, as did Bentham, that what matters is not whether an animal can reason or talk but whether it can suffer. And if an animal can suffer we have no moral right to torture it for medical research or to slaughter it for supper. ("When the United



"Eat your lunch, and then we'll see about giving your phone back."

States Defense Department finds that its use of beagles to test lethal gases has evoked a howl of protest and offers to use rats instead," he wrote in "Animal Liberation," "I am not appeased.")

Singer has never been afraid to take pure reason and drive it over a cliff. He asks horrifying questions and then answers them in unexpected ways. If killing baby girls (painlessly, of course) makes sense for farmers in China, then why not kill them? If a pregnant woman has inconclusive results from amniocentesis, Singer doesn't see why she shouldn't carry the fetus to term. Then, if the baby is severely disabled and the parents prefer to kill it, they should be allowed to. That way there would be fewer needless abortions and more healthy babies. (If killing the child would cause the parents distress, however, Singer believes that it would be wrong.) "What I am saying is that those decisions can also be made when life hasn't really got going," he told me, "because there isn't a being, a person who leads that life."

As an ethicist, Singer addresses questions faced by any family that has ever been confronted with an elderly, sick, or helpless relative. He is important for the same reason that he is alarming: unlike most of us, Singer is willing—even eager—to answer those questions in the most unpleasantly honest way. "To say that I believe Peter is wrong about most of what he says would be an understatement," says Norman Ford, a Catholic priest and the director of Melbourne's Caroline Chisolm Center for Health Ethics, who has known and admired Singer for years. "But at least he is willing to talk about what is on everybody's mind. He is not afraid to say, 'These are the problems of our time. Now let's deal with them.' He is not up there on Olympus—he is in the marketplace. And for a philosopher that is rare."

Many of Singer's opponents are offended by his activism, however. George Pell, the Archbishop of Melbourne, has called Singer "Herod's propaganda minister," and recently, in a particularly ill-informed series of editorials, the *Wall Street Journal* compared him to Hitler's ideological henchman Martin Bormann. The attack was nothing new. Singer has been prevented from speaking at conferences in Germany, in Austria, and even in Switzerland, where he was once assaulted by people who saw in his philosophy an echo of the Nazi view that some lives are worth living and others are not. "When I rose to speak, a section of the audience . . . began to chant, 'Singer *raus!* Singer *raus!*'" he wrote in 1991. "As I heard this chanted, in German . . . I had an overwhelming feeling that this was what it must have been like to attempt to reason against the rising tide of Nazism in the declining days of the Weimar Republic. The difference was that the chant would have been not 'Singer *raus!*' but '*Juden raus!*'" (That three of Singer's four grandparents perished in concentration camps was never mentioned by the protesters.)

I WASN'T sure what to expect when I travelled to Melbourne, in May, to see the man who had for so many years caused such fury. Despite the strident certainty of his prose, he hadn't seemed like a priggish moralist when we talked on the telephone. One friend told me, though, that unless I wanted to provoke a confrontation it would be inappropriate to wear leather shoes around a man who wrote that our refusal to grant other animals moral equality is like saying that all human beings—even psychopaths and murderers—are superior to any dolphin or chimpanzee.

Singer had warned me that after such a long flight I would be good for little more than a walk, and when I got to my hotel and called him he suggested that we take one. He lived nearby, and said he'd come right over. I almost changed into sneakers, but it looked like rain, and I decided not to be ridiculous. I wondered if Singer would be lucid, articulate, and cold in person—a kind of high-end automaton. (His twenty-four-year-old daughter, Marion, told me that once when her mother was away from home for several months Singer prepared the same dinner of spicy Asian soup for himself nearly every night.)

Singer appeared within minutes. He turned out to be a genial man, both eager to talk and happy to listen. He was dressed in brown wide-wale corduroys (which he wore nearly every day I spent with him), a green ribbed sweater, and canvas shoes. The Australian winter was on its way, and it was windy as we walked by Port Phillip Bay. Singer and his wife, Renata, were then living in a lovely Victorian row house across the street from the Royal Yacht Club, in a neighborhood called St. Kilda. It hadn't been long since the area was dominated by strip joints and junkies, but in the past decade St. Kilda had made the inevitable demographic shift toward noodle shops, Borders Books, and big-screen multiplexes. Singer asked if I wanted lunch, and wondered how I felt about vegetarian food. It was clear that he was prepared to watch me eat a chicken sandwich if necessary, but we ended up in a tiny place that served delicious macrobiotic vegan casseroles with unpronounceable names.

Because I didn't want to discuss anything too controversial in our first encounter, I told Singer what a profound effect "Animal Liberation" had had on many of the people I'd spoken with before travelling to Australia. It had originated in 1973 as an unsolicited contribution to *The New York Review of Books*—the first of many pieces he would publish there. The article received so much attention that Singer expanded it into a book. I asked him if he had been surprised by its lasting impact.

"To be honest, I was somewhat disappointed," Singer told me, a slightly wistful tone creeping into his voice. "It's had effects around the margins, of course, but they have mostly been minor. When I wrote it, I really thought the book would change the world. I know it sounds a little grand now, but at the time the sixties still existed for us. It looked as if real changes were possible, and I let myself believe that this would be one of them. All you have to do is walk around the corner to McDonald's to see how successful I have been."

It was hard for me to believe he felt that way. The book has been used by scores of organizations, including the aggressive and extremely visible People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, which was created in its wake. And it remains influential: next spring, for the first time, Harvard Law School is offering a course on animal-rights law, and "Animal Liberation" is on the syllabus. Singer stayed glum for only a moment, though. "It's one of the important things I intend to work on in the U.S.," he told me, adding that America is the most callous and brazen producer of factory-made food. "The United States is the worst offender of the major countries. But obviously it's the most important."

Although Singer has been called a right-wing killer by his most frenzied and ignorant enemies, he is really more of an enlightenment liberal. (He has just completed a book that attempts to reclaim the legacy of Charles Darwin for the political left.) He is intensely political, and he knows how to wield his renown: this is a philosopher who sat in a cage in the middle of Melbourne to publicize the plight of battery hens, who has often protested against circuses, and who was once arrested while trying to photograph sows confined on a pig farm owned by the Australian Prime Minister. In 1996, hobbled by compulsive honesty, he ran a spectacularly unsuccessful race as a Green candidate for the Australian Senate. Had he been elected, Singer told me, he was prepared to give up academia completely—and I sensed that he wouldn't have minded a bit. Instead, his tenured chair at Princeton will make it possible for him to become the most prominent bioethicist in the United States.

Singer didn't seek the job at Princeton but felt that he couldn't turn it down. In "How Are We to Live?," his 1993 examination of ethics in an age of self-interest, Singer wrote, "In the United States today, the social fabric of society has decayed to the point at which there are grounds for fearing that it has passed the point of no return." When I asked him why he thought it was worth bothering with the place if it was so far gone, he replied, "The alternatives are all too horrible to consider. I have to at least give it a try."

SINGER has never been reluctant to speak his mind. Born in Melbourne, in 1946, he and his older sister, Joan, grew up in a prosperous, happy family. His father, Ernest, who died in 1982, was a successful importer of coffee and tea. The family rarely celebrated any Jewish holiday; even so, his parents were astonished when Peter told them that he had no intention of going through with his bar mitzvah, because he did not believe in God. "Maybe my father was a little bit disappointed, although he was not really religious," Singer told me. "But my mother was probably quite pleased. My mother didn't identify with the Jewish community at all."

At the University of Melbourne, Singer became interested in philosophy, but he found metaphysics dry. "You can get into discussions about 'Is this a table in front of us?' for quite a while," he said, pointing to a coffee table in his living room. "But the ethical discussions and the political philosophy seemed to be a lot more relevant and interesting." Singer was at Oxford when the war in Vietnam and the American civil-rights movement made academic philosophy seem antiquated. "I did a thesis at Oxford on civil disobedience, using Vietnam and Northern Ireland as examples," he said. "I wanted to pursue ethics, but not at an academic and theoretical level."

At Oxford, Singer was surprised when he noticed that friends of his were not eating meat, and more surprised when they told him they were vegetarians for moral reasons. He had never given the issue much thought. But within weeks he and his wife decided that vegetarianism was the only ethical way to live. "When you start analyzing it," Singer told me, "it's so clearly wrong to eat the flesh of other animals that we simply had no choice."

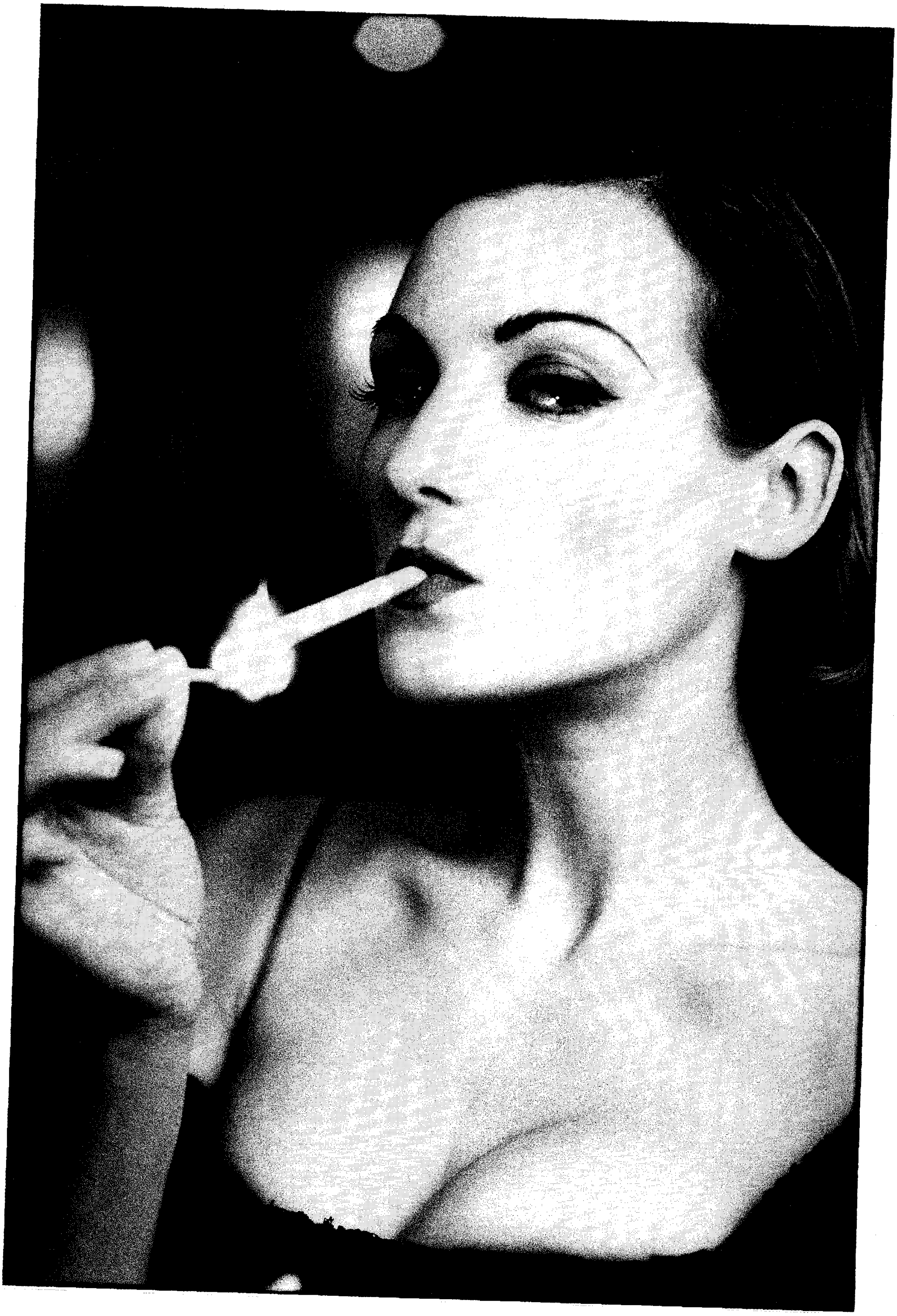
Critics say that his moral certainty is one of Singer's most significant flaws—that he is too demanding, too impersonal, and too dismissive of the way people actually relate to one another. In its rawest form, Singer's philosophy condemns people for caring more about their families than about strangers. "People do have special relationships with their families, their communities, and their countries," Alan Ryan, the warden of New College, Oxford, told me. Ryan has written extensively on John Stuart Mill and he taught for many years at Princeton. "This is the standard equipment of humanity, and most people, in all of human history, have seen nothing wrong with it. Singer is an interesting and important fellow, but I am afraid that human beings just aren't put together the way that he wishes they were." In Ryan's view, no moral philosophy that departs so fundamentally from such common sentiments could possibly make sense.

Other philosophers criticize Singer more for the logical consequences of his beliefs than for his refusal to acknowledge that emotion plays an essential role in the narrative of life. For example, if we could take an action today that

WILLKOMMEN

The cool cabaret mix that has made Joe's Pub a downtown hot spot continues this fall with a distinctly cosmopolitan lineup: in addition to the German-born singer Ute Lemper (right), performing her Weimar-and-Weill repertoire, the South African jazz pianist Abdullah Ibrahim and his trio, the performance artist Ann Magnuson (in a special Halloween show), and the Broadway favorite Faith Prince will all be stopping in.

Photograph by Max Vadukul



"See, it's right here in the pre-nup. If you walk out, I get two weeks' severance sex."

• •

would benefit many people in three thousand years, Singer would tell us to do it. It wouldn't matter that we would never see the benefits—or that the action might even cause us some harm. Yet predicting the long-term effects of something is like guessing how the winds passing over the Sahara this summer will affect the world's weather in fifty years. There will be an impact, but who could accurately assess it now? Often, acts that seem benevolent—such as providing aid to starving nations—can have unforeseen and disastrous results, causing warfare, corruption, and, ultimately, more starvation. Even Singer's laudable desire to reduce suffering in the present can be seen as a recipe for the ruin of the world economy. Colin McGinn, who is a professor of philosophy at Rutgers University, asks, "What if you took every penny you ever had and gave it to the poor of Africa, as he would have us do? What we would have is no economy, no ability to generate new wealth or help anybody."

Despite Singer's immense influence—and perhaps because of it—most academic philosophers do not consider him an original thinker. "In many ways, I think Singer is more of a politician than a philosopher," McGinn told me. "He is a practical man, not a theorist. Yet, when it comes to a broader impact, I would have to admit that he may be the most influential philosopher alive. Singer wants to get out there and change the world, and to a degree that is surprising he has already succeeded." Even those who show real ambivalence about Singer as an intellectual leader show none about his qualifications for the new post at Princeton. After all, he has turned out a small mountain of prose in the past quarter century—more than two dozen books, as well as scores of articles in the scholarly and popular press—touching on many of the crucial ethical issues of our time, from cloning and genetic screening to what it means to live a moral life. With his closest colleague at Melbourne's Monash University, Helga Kuhse, he edited *Bioethics*, one of the field's most authoritative journals.

"Would I elect him to public office?" asked Henry Greely, professor of law and co-director of the program on Genomics, Ethics, and Society at Stanford University. "No. Would I make him a university president or a dean? Probably not. But is he a real and important philosopher? Yes. I think we, as a society, should give our philosophers room to think and write and say things that are against the social mores. Otherwise, we might as well be Athenians on one of their more deplorable days, executing Socrates."

By 1998, Princeton had been searching for its new Ira W. DeCamp Professor of Bioethics for nearly a decade. In many respects, Singer was an obvious choice, but he was also a controversial one. The philosophy department wanted a theorist, and Singer specializes in applied ethics, with its focus on the world outside the academy. The biology department was nervous about hiring anyone who might oppose experiments with animals. The university, however, wanted to hire a professor who could stimulate debate. So Princeton made an unusual decision: Singer won't be a member of either department. Instead, he has been appointed solely to the university's Center for Human Values.

Princeton's leaders have been valiant in defending their new professor's right to say whatever he wants. Still, the school is reeling from the public reaction to its choice. Long before Singer moved to America, in July, the university was picketed by groups such as Not Dead Yet, whose leader, Diane Coleman, told me that Singer "was a public advocate of genocide and the most dangerous man on earth." There were demonstrations against Singer last spring, and Coleman told me that pickets would return when school begins again.

There has also been dissent among Princeton officials. Not long ago, Steve Forbes, a Republican Presidential candidate, who is a member of Princeton's board of trustees, sent a sharply worded letter—which invoked the Nazi euthanasia program—to the university's president, Harold Shapiro, urging him to rescind the appointment. Shapiro, who is also the chairman of President Clinton's National Bioethics Advisory Commission, told me that he would never attempt to do such a thing, and noted, pointedly, that the appointment should not have caught Forbes by surprise, since Princeton's board must approve the hiring of every tenured professor. Even so, Princeton was unprepared for the intensity of the protest that has accompanied the selection. The university has been forced to take elaborate measures to insure Singer's safety; Shapiro has received death threats; a campus group has been established to protest infanticide; and even the usually tame *Princeton Alumni Weekly* has printed letters like one from a member of the class of '38, which states, "Nothing I have seen or heard epitomizes the decline of Western civilization so much as the hiring of Peter Singer to teach in the university's Center for Human Values."

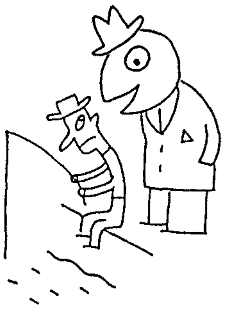
WATCHING Peter Singer think is like staring at the shifting gears of a precision engine: when you ask him about something, no matter how contentious or complex it is, you can see him churning through the calculations needed to produce a response. In the week I spent with him, he never once begged off a question. Singer told me that heroin should be legal, since its "prohibition has done more harm than good," and that violations of seat-belt laws should be punished, because the consequences of traffic accidents place an unfair burden on society. I asked about one probable result of genetic research, the ability to grow—from embryonic stem cells—organs to be used solely for spare body parts. He agreed that it was a tricky area with possibilities for abuse, by which he meant that only rich people would be able to dip into a vault to retrieve, say, a spare liver or heart. But in principle he doesn't see the harm in it. "I wouldn't say it's intrinsically wrong," he told me. "Some people would just say, 'Well, using a human being as a means for spare parts is wrong.' I am not there."

This sort of reasoning can seem both numbingly logical and excessively coarse. Take, for example, his view of charity. Singer has written that humans need to overcome their greed, but more than once, as we strolled along the streets of Melbourne and Sydney, I saw him walk past homeless beggars without giving them a glance. When I asked if that was difficult, he looked surprised. "Not at all," he said. "Maybe you just help them take themselves into oblivion for a while. I would much rather give where I am convinced that the money will be used for good." The logic is hard to deny, yet there was something strangely disquieting about the ease with which this man—who, in the words of the British philosopher Bernard Williams, "is always so keen to mortify himself and tell everyone how to live"—could walk by people who were so desperately in need.

Despite Singer's often inflexible rhetoric, he has always acknowledged the gap between what he writes and how people live. "I think the point of espousing a theory is to say, 'Look, if you're really going to be serious about ethics, well, here's a proposal as to how far you ought to go. Now, tell me why that's wrong,' " he said. "And if someone answers, 'Well, nobody's going to do it,' I don't think that's an answer at all." On the other hand, Singer tries not to be "rabbinical" about his beliefs. He no longer minds having dinner with people who order steak, and when I asked his thoughts about a recent operation in which surgeons implanted the aorta of a cow in a thirteen-month-old boy he said that if it was genuinely a choice between the cow and the boy they should save the boy. "If they are killing a million cows a day for dinner," he said dryly, "it's hard to make the case that we shouldn't use one to save a young boy's life."

This past year, Singer published "Ethics Into Action," which is in many ways his most personal book. It is a biography of the American animal-rights activist Henry Spira, who was extraordinarily effective because he never let himself behave so radically that people could dismiss him as a kook. Almost single-handedly, Spira brought an end to the barbaric practice of testing cosmetics by blinding live rabbits. He was a great friend of Singer's, and he was Singer's hero—in part because Spira demonstrated that the world is not simply divided into saints and sinners, and that some ethics are better than none. One of Singer's daughters told me that when Spira died it was the first time she had ever seen her father so upset.

Still, many of Singer's critics dismiss him as a secular puritan so inflamed by his idea of rectitude that he can't even recognize his own contradictions. Singer feels that this is unfair, and he may have a point: although he fails to live up to the rigid rules he has put down on paper, he probably comes as close to doing so as anyone could. He gives away twenty per cent of his annual income, including all royalties from "Practical Ethics." He lives comfortably but frugally. He doesn't eat meat or fish, or wear leather. Yet Singer's writing is so high-handed that any inconsistency between his life and his work is hard to dismiss. Singer has certainly done nothing to impoverish himself, for instance, and his daughters also live comfortably, aided by the income of a trust set up by his father which—he would have to agree—none of them need.



Some opponents of utilitarianism say that when you turn human values into a series of preferences and run them all through a continuous personal calculator you risk dissolving the notion of human character completely. They call it moral economics. Others, who rely on rationality just as much as Singer does, would say that Singer's views are not as rational as he thinks they are. "He's always so damn logical," Bernard Williams told me. "But Singer leaves out an entire dimension of value. After all, who says his way is the right way to live? Every moral theory is based on somebody's intuition. He simply has the intuition that intuitions don't make sense. But how did he get there?" In Singer's eyes, however, philosophers like Williams rely too heavily on emotion to make good judgment possible. Singer feels that "intuitions" are vague, misleading, and unlikely ever to solve complicated problems. "Lay off with the 'You reason, so you don't feel stuff,' please," he wrote recently in a short, quasi-fictional essay that was included in J. M. Coetzee's book "The Lives of Animals." "I feel, but I also think about what I feel. When people say we should *only* feel . . . I am reminded of Göring, who said, 'I think with my blood.' See where it led him."

ANNE MCDONALD lives in an airy Federal-style home in one of Melbourne's many suburban neighborhoods. The building, which still has its turn-of-the-century pressed-zinc ceilings, is shrouded in vines and surrounded by cypresses. When I went to visit her there one crisp afternoon, it took five minutes for her to answer the door.

McDonald has athetoid cerebral palsy. She is bound to a wheelchair—literally strapped in with a seat belt—and she wears an alphabet board around her neck like a lobster bib. An elaborate computerized device sits on her lap, and this is what permitted her to say hello to me, in a recorded voice message that had been created from the several thousand utterances programmed into the machine. McDonald has long brown hair, and her eyes are an electric blue. They play an especially important role in her life, because she uses them to say yes and no: squeezed shut for yes, wide open for no.

She is exactly what Peter Singer had in mind when he wrote, in "Practical Ethics," "It may still be objected that to replace either a fetus or a newborn infant is wrong because it suggests to disabled people living today that their lives are less worth living than the lives of people who are not disabled. Yet it is surely flying in the face of reality to deny that, on average, this is so." McDonald, who has known Singer for more than fifteen years, agrees with much he has to say and is glad he has the nerve to say it. "There was a point when I should have been killed," she told me, referring to the years when she was treated as human refuse on the wards of Melbourne's St. Nicholas Hospital. "I often prayed for it. But now I am alive," she said, tapping out her messages in phonetic code on her alphabet board, "and I enjoy my life very much."

McDonald is thirty-eight years old. She was a breech baby, and that placed an abnormal amount of pressure on the base of her brain as she passed through her mother's cervix. The result was a subdural hemorrhage, and she suffered massive—but very localized—brain damage. Athetosis makes her body quiver and quake. Spasmodically unable to command her muscles or vocal cords, she often sounds like a bird. But McDonald can think as clearly as any "normal" person.

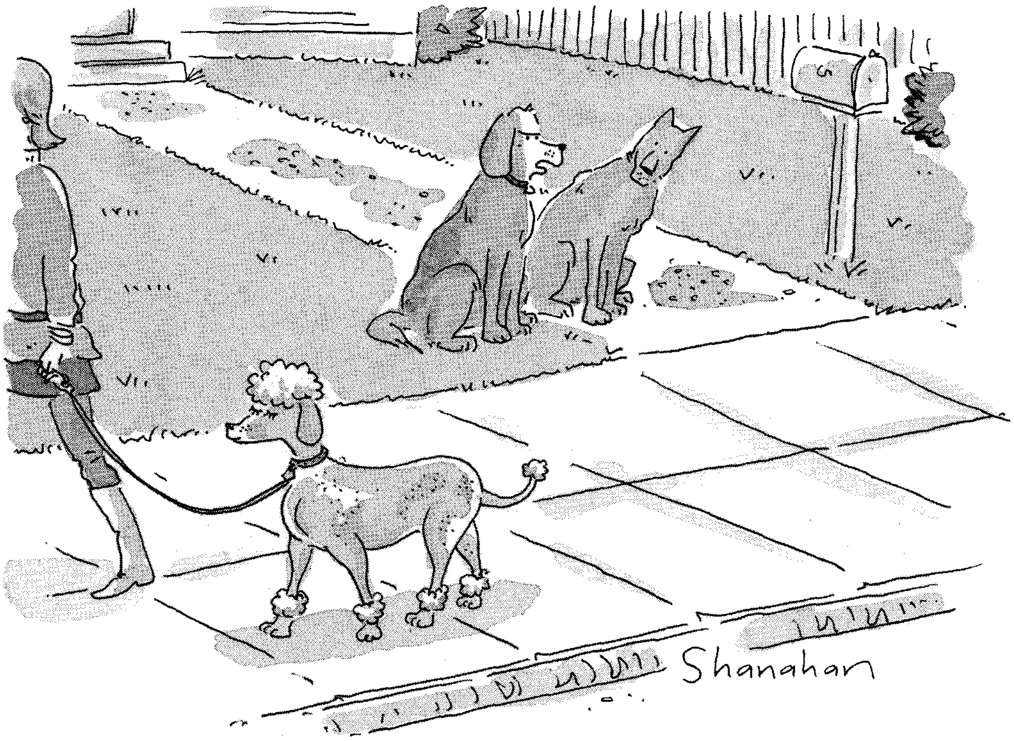
Rosemary Crossley found McDonald in 1974, locked away in St. Nicholas, where she had been since she was three. Crossley runs the Deal Communication Center, which provides services for people who can't talk as a result of conditions such as cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, and strokes. In 1977, when McDonald was sixteen years old and weighed twenty-eight pounds, Crossley took her home for the weekend because she thought that the girl was about to die. That Sunday, Crossley and the man she lives with wanted to visit an art gallery, and they brought McDonald along in a baby stroller, which was the perfect size for her shrunken teen-age body. "She started smiling at the paintings," Crossley told me. "She was looking at the Matisses, and she was transfixed by them. We could tell there was something there, and we decided to help her get it out."

McDonald demonstrates as forcefully as anyone could that it is impossible to know what is going on inside the brain of a person who is unable to communicate. After a long struggle, McDonald learned to read and write. She studied philosophy of science at Deakin University and fine art at the University of Melbourne, has published a book, travels around the world, and pays her taxes with at least as much pleasure as any citizen of Australia. In 1982, she and Crossley considered writing a book, "Care, Cure, or Kill," about the fate of disabled infants. They eventually decided against it, but in the course of their research they went to interview Peter Singer.

It was the start of a strangely warm relationship. Singer's sister is a lawyer, who has been active in supporting the disabled, and she and Singer have become the Deal Communication Center's biggest benefactors. Singer likes McDonald, and he would never say that she should die, while McDonald is clearly fond of Singer. Their principal conflict concerns how to determine what it is possible for a disabled person to achieve. "It is always a question of whether the future will be as bad as it looks," McDonald told me. If you know that it is going to be impossibly bleak and filled with suffering, she said, then Singer's view has more validity. But who, exactly, can know the future? "We can always be sure of one thing," McDonald said. "The dead have no regrets. Peter thinks that way. He knows me. But he doesn't think about individuals. We are all just a category to him."

Advocacy groups for the disabled say that one reason Singer writes them off is that he places too much trust in the prognoses of doctors. The medical profession does tend to rate the quality of life for children with disabilities less highly than their parents do. But parents almost always follow medical advice on what to do about an infant with suspected or known disabilities. If the doctors say that the kindest thing would be to let the child die, most parents acquiesce. If, on the other hand, they say, "Let's give the child a chance," that's what the parents will usually do.

Oddly, by arguing that disabled children should sometimes be killed, Singer seems, if anything, to be worrying too much about their pain. He is so devoted to the prevention of suffering—in a hen, a cow, or a human infant—that he dismisses the possibility that there might be more than that to many people's lives. "Most of us live through our own experiences," Rosemary Crossley told me. "So Peter as-



"Something ought to be left to the imagination."

sumes that people would be happy if they had the experiences that he had. For most of us, it is hard to live without reading, if you are a reader, or having sex, or jogging, or eating Chinese food. Whatever makes you happy, if you see people who cannot experience those things, you assume they cannot be happy. But that is not necessarily the case, and I don't think Peter has ever fully come to grips with that."

"Peter is a perfectly sincere man," McDonald told me. "But he thinks real life is not as important as intellectual life. So he can be very compelling when he talks about the intelligence and feelings of a pig. But he is somehow not as quick to understand what our problems and possibilities might be. He has all these big ideas, but he has never really gotten his hands dirty. Peter needs to get a little more involved in life if he wants to understand it."

"And I'm sure no one will mind if we fold a few clothes while we talk."

• •

THE Peter Singer who has just moved to America is not the unyielding radical who wrote "Animal Liberation" twenty-five years ago. In a sad fulfillment of Anne McDonald's wish, Singer has been dealt a bitter dose of real life. His mother, Cora, who was once an intellectually active and vibrant woman, has fallen ill with Alzheimer's disease. She no longer recognizes Singer or his sister or any of her grandchildren. She is in a state that Helga Kuhse, who is her medical executor as well as her son's closest academic collaborator, described to me as one in which she would clearly not want to be alive any longer: "She always said, 'When I can't tie my shoes and I can't read, I don't want to be here.' Those were her criteria, physical and mental. And she knew what she was saying—she was a doctor. We don't have active euthanasia in this country, but she certainly would not want drugs to treat an infection or anything else that could prolong her life."

Singer would never kill his mother, even if he thought it was what she wanted. He told me that he believes in Jack Kevorkian's attempts to help people die, but he also said that such a system works only when a patient is still able to express her wishes. Cora Singer never had that chance; like so many others, she slipped too quickly into the vague region between life and death.

When Singer's mother became too ill to live alone, Singer and his sister hired a team of home health-care aides to look after her. Singer's mother has lost her ability to reason, to be a person, as he defines the term. So I asked him how a man who has written that we ought to do what is morally right without regard to proximity or family relationships could possibly spend tens of thousands of dollars a year on private care for his mother. He replied that it was "probably not the best use you could make of my money. That is true. But it does provide employment for a number of people who find something worthwhile in what they're doing."

This is a noble sentiment, but it hardly fits with Peter Singer's rules for living an ethical life. He once told me that he has no respect for people who donate funds for research on breast cancer or heart disease in the hope that it might indirectly save them or members of their family from illness, since they could be using that money to save the lives of the poor. ("That is not charity," he said. "It's self-interest.") Singer has responded to his mother's illness the way most caring people would. The irony is that his humane actions clash so profoundly with the chords of his utilitarian ethic.

That doesn't surprise Bernard Williams. "You can't make these calculations and comparisons in real life. It's bluff," Williams told me. "One of the reasons his approach is so popular is that it reduces all moral puzzlement to a formula. You remove puzzlement and doubt and conflict of values, and it's in the scientific spirit. People seem to think it will all add up, but it never does, because humans never do."

Singer may be learning that. We were sitting in his living room one day, and the trolley traffic was noisy on the street outside his window. Singer has spent his career trying to lay down rules for human behavior which are divorced from emotion and intuition. His is a world that makes no provision for private aides to look after addled, dying old women. Yet he can't help himself. "I think this has made me see how the issues of someone with these kinds of problems are really very difficult," he said quietly. "Perhaps it is more difficult than I thought before, because it is different when it's your mother." ♦

ANNALS OF ENTERTAINMENT

CREATIVE DIFFERENCES

David Lynch wanted to make a TV series unlike any other. The network said it was eager to get beyond the formulas of prime-time programming. What could go wrong?

BY TAD FRIEND

It was a mild March night in Hollywood, near the end of the shoot for "Mulholland Drive," a two-hour pilot that David Lynch was filming for ABC. Lynch, the writer and director, ran a hand through his shock of gray hair and made fluttery gestures to his special-effects man, Jason Collins. The prosthetic body was too... *something*. Bulbous, maybe. Michael J. Anderson, who is a dwarf, was playing a mysterious studio magnate named Mr. Roque, and Lynch had him stand on the seat of a wooden wheelchair while he was being buttressed by foam legs and silicone arm extensions, so that he'd resemble a normal man. Normal, but with a worrisomely tiny head. "It's a man's head!" Lynch advised Collins, who stared back blankly. "It's a man's head!"

"You have to surrender to the obscurity of David's vision," Collins told me two nights later, as he returned to the lot at Paramount Studios carrying prosthetic limbs whose joints had been shaved down and made more angular. "Beautiful!" Lynch said, inspecting the apparatus under the thousand-watt "baby" lights of the cavernous soundstage. "He'll look perfect, natural—but paralyzed. Good deal, buster!"

At 1:30 A.M., on a small office set, Anderson stood up in the wheelchair, his head popping out above the lapels of a nailhead business suit twice his size. A light shaped like a stove hood brooded above him, a cobalt-blue lamp glowed on a desk, and brown draperies shrouded the walls. The set's spareness is a Lynch trademark, and the draperies are a familiar exhibit in his gallery of obsessional motifs, which also includes random blue objects, antlers, yellow highway markings, guttering candles, closeups of women's lipsticked lips, long screams into telephone receivers, and the sounds of buzzers and steam.

"I feel like I'm preparing for a space shot," the immobilized Anderson murmured as a production assistant hand-fed him bites of chicken satay. Then, looking up at Lynch, he asked, "Where do your ideas come from?" The director laughed companionably, but wouldn't answer. " 'Never you mind where my ideas come from,' " Anderson continued, mimicking Lynch, for this was a well-worn joke between them. Nine years ago, Anderson played the inscrutable dancing dwarf who appeared in dreams to Agent Dale Cooper on Lynch's "Twin Peaks," the hit show on ABC that shot up like a rocket in the ratings—and down just as fast. But Anderson maintains that even he could never get Lynch to explain what that dwarf character meant. "David's work isn't consciously coherent," he says, "but its coherence on an unconscious level is inescapable—almost against your will."

American viewers relished the bewilderment. Their passion for the show's swaying stoplights and barking teenagers, for its one-armed demon and innuendos about cherry pie, made way for the creation of such offbeat television shows as "Northern Exposure" and "The X-Files." Yet nothing on the air since "Twin Peaks" has approached its originality. Steve Tao, ABC's vice-president of drama programming, told me, " 'Twin Peaks' was like a young rocker who dies in an airplane crash—the early departure creates an even greater hunger. We're hoping to feed that hunger with 'Mulholland Drive.' "

On the set, Anderson's tiny head above the big suit looked eerily like the squalling baby's head that pops out from the neck of its father's suit in "Eraserhead," which was Lynch's first and strangest film: both images trigger a primal anxiety. "People are capable of taking jumps into another way of thinking," Lynch says. "The jump mechanism has got rusty and sleepy, particularly if you watch only television, but it's there in everybody. ABC just has to trust me that people will respond."

At 3 A.M., Lynch was finally ready to shoot the dwarf scene, in which a studio executive, played by Robert Katima, pushes an intercom outside Mr. Roque's office and asks for instructions. Anderson has just two lines: "Then?" and "Yes?" The only direction that Lynch offered Anderson was "O.K., you're a rock. Remember, a rock." But Lynch was shooting the dialogue from outside Roque's glass-walled office, so the scene's visual focus was the intercom, shaped like an old-fashioned transistor radio. Then Lynch asked, "Can we put a little spot on Robert?" Suddenly, Katima's spotlit face, reflected in the glass, floated like a ghost in the frame. And when Lynch suggested that the lamp above Mr. Roque should grow gradually brighter, then fade to black at the end, he had conjured a haunting image of the remoteness of power.

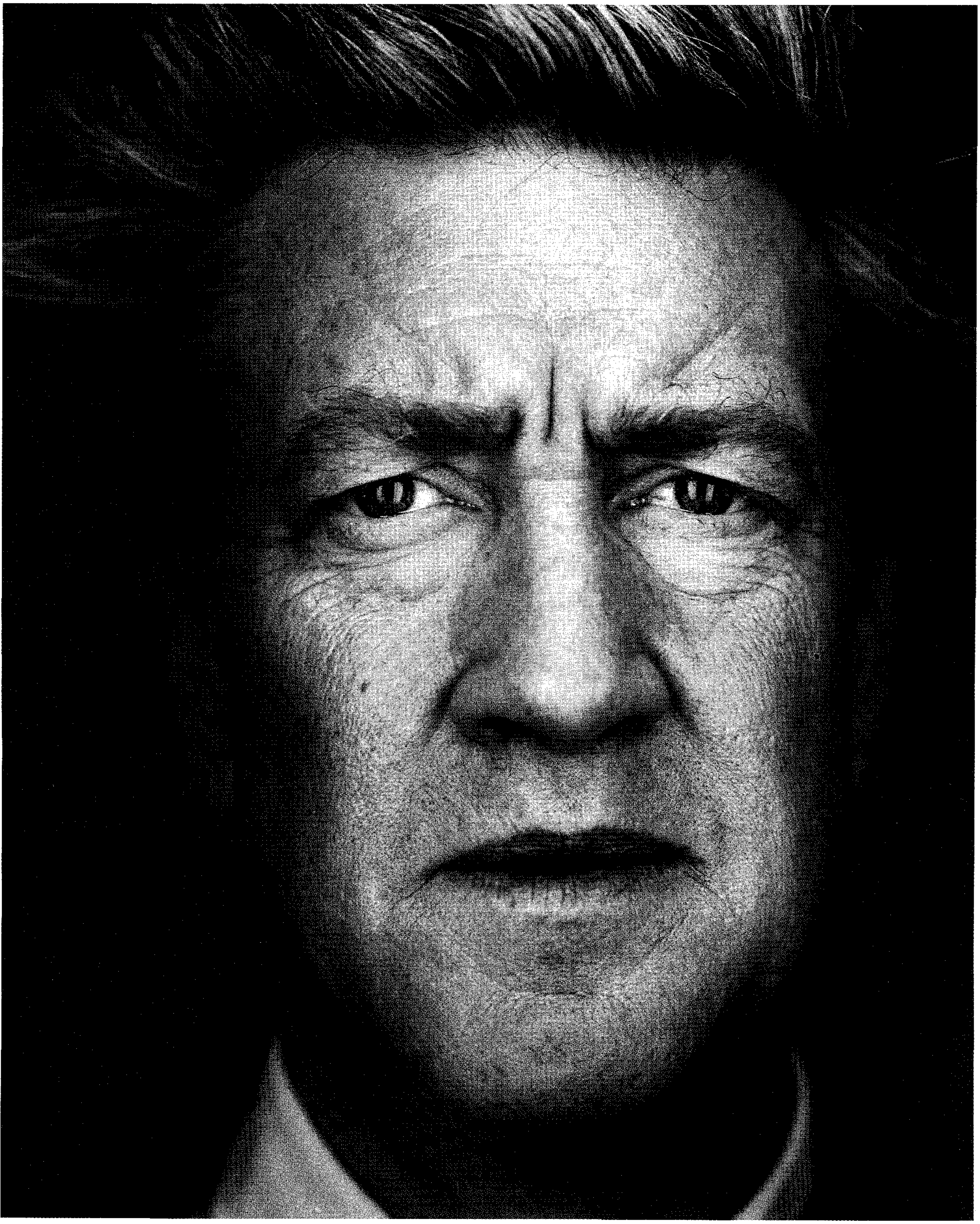
"That was a humdinger!" Lynch said, grinning.

Mark Cotone, the assistant director, agreed. "This is now my favorite shot in the movie, sir!"

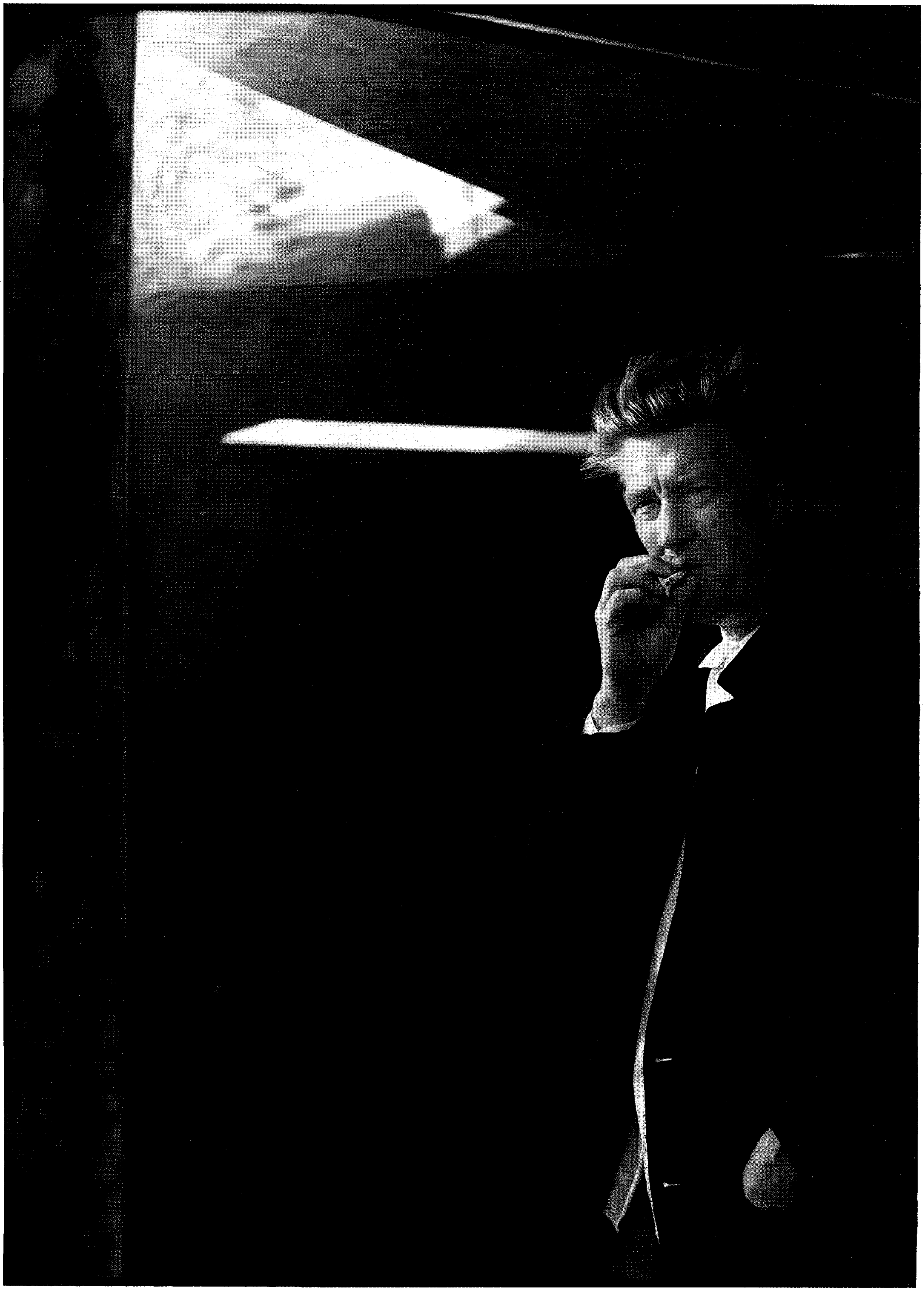
Michael Polaire, Lynch's line producer, stood ten feet behind the gleeful crew. "It's great," he said carefully, "but it's way out there for ABC—they'll probably think, What the fuck is this? TV is now about speed and snappy dialogue, for people hitting the remote. It'll be interesting to see, nine years after 'Twin Peaks,' whether people will stick with something so

SABA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARTIN SCHOELLER

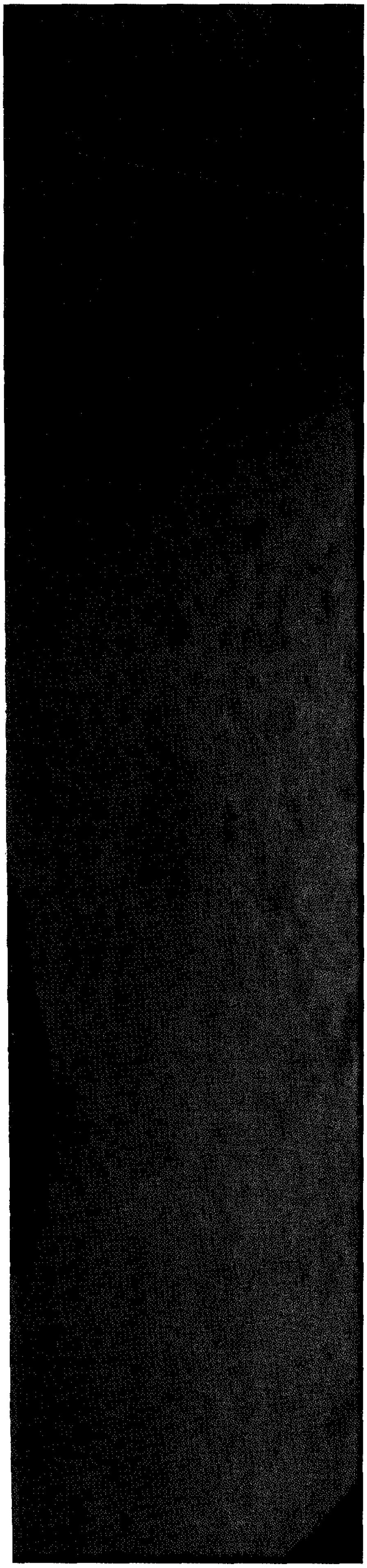


ABC was excited but wary about Lynch's pilot: "Twin Peaks" had shown how quickly he could gain a mass following—and lose it.



SABA

In the nineties, David Lynch developed serious doubts about television. "With all the commercials and its terrible sound and pictu



says, *"TV is a hair of a joke, really."*

painterly and . . ." Failing to find a euphemism, he shrugged: ". . . and slow."

ONE day last August, David Lynch drove his 1971 Mercedes to Century City to pitch "Mulholland Drive" to Jamie Tarses, the president—until her resignation last week—of ABC Entertainment, and one of her senior deputies, Steve Tao. The executives were in a receptive mood: "Just the title alone had us really excited," Tao told me. "David Lynch's 'Mulholland Drive'!" Tao and his colleagues were enthusiastic about the prospect of developing a show that would be both a critical and a popular success—that wouldn't be just another knockoff of "Friends." As Tao saw it, "Quite frankly, there is a plethora of sameness on TV. David Lynch's television stands out. A show by him could be one of those large events—like Monica Lewinsky's interview with Barbara Walters—that people gather together to watch. We're trying to create appointment television."

The meeting began with Lynch sitting on a wing of Tarses's beige couch ensemble, drinking one of his dozen daily cups of black coffee and staring at the four television monitors in the room. Tony Krantz, Lynch's friend and production partner, then read aloud the first two pages of Lynch's treatment:

> EXTERIOR. NIGHT—HOLLYWOOD HILLS, LOS ANGELES. Darkness. Distant sounds of freeway traffic. Then the closer sound of a car—its headlights illumine an oleander bush and the limbs of a eucalyptus tree. Then the headlights turn—a street sign is suddenly brightly lit. The words on the sign read "Mulholland Drive." The car moves under the sign as it turns and the words fall once again into darkness.

Krantz went on reading, describing how the black Cadillac limousine pulls over and the driver points a gun at the beautiful brunette in the back seat. Just then, two cars full of drag-racing teenagers scream around the corner, and one car slams into the limo. The woman staggers out of the wreck and, severely dazed, makes her way down the hill toward Hollywood.

Having rehearsed earlier with Lynch, Krantz tried to sell the images with what he calls "subtle dramatic emphases." Krantz, who is the forty-year-old son of the novelist Judith Krantz, wears jaunty half-boots and jackets with asymmetrical buttons, and greets favored writers with a snappy "Hey, superstar!" or "What rhymes with [your name here]? Fabulous!" He employs these people skills as the co-chairman and C.E.O. of Imagine Television, which produces such shows as "Sports Night" and "The PJs" in a joint venture with the Walt Disney Company (which also owns ABC).

When Lynch was making "Twin Peaks," in 1990, he had mentioned the idea for "Mulholland Drive" over dinner with Krantz at a Hollywood restaurant called Muse; they commemorated the moment by signing a paper placemat. Krantz, who was then a television agent known for having "packaged" "Twin Peaks"—that is, having assembled its creative team—taped the placemat to his refrigerator and kept nagging Lynch about the show.

In the intervening period, however, Lynch developed serious doubts about television. "With all the commercials and its terrible sound and picture," he said recently, "TV is a hair of a joke, really." In the early nineties, after ABC abruptly cancelled a sitcom Lynch co-created, "On the Air," he angrily painted a plywood board with the words "I WILL NEVER WORK IN TELEVISION AGAIN." In recent years, he had made only one film, the poorly received "Lost Highway," and seemed perfectly happy painting, composing music, and puttering in his home woodshop.

But Krantz's passion for high-quality television is infectious: Imagine's producers regularly repeat such "Tonyisms" as "We can go up in flames, or down in flames, but we want to *be* in flames." He finally persuaded Lynch to proceed with "Mulholland Drive" by emphasizing that television is a Scheherazade-like medium, which requires endless improvisation. "Tony knew that I've never liked having to bend my movie scripts to an end halfway through," Lynch says. "On a series you can keep having beginnings and middles, and develop story forever."

At the meeting in Tarses's office, Krantz set the scene for ten minutes before Lynch took over the pitch. With an American Spirit cigarette perpetually dangling from his lips, his bluff, weather-beaten face, his unvarying outfit of a white shirt buttoned to the neck, an old black sweater, and chinos, Lynch needs only a windblown scarf to be the picture of a barnstorming aviator. Now fifty-three, he peppers his speech with slang out of the *Saturday Evening Post:* "Holy jumping George!" and "Wow-wee, Bob!" and "I'll be ding-danged!" "David is straight from the forties," says Lynch's film editor and longtime companion, Mary Sweeney. "He has the big hands, the dreaminess, and he is caught in a cycle of remembering driving back then in Montana with his granddad Austin Lynch—the giant steering wheel gripped by leather driving gloves, the slow sound of the wheels. He feels the same way about Los Angeles, which is a character in this film—the bygone smells, and the wisteria, and the dreaminess." But sun-dappled nostalgia accounts for only a portion of Lynch's dreams. The rest involve such dark scenarios as Dennis Hopper sucking from a gas inhaler in "Blue Velvet" and mewing "Baby wants to fuck!"

THE APPRENTICE

When she was five
after her radiant mother
kissed her and vanished to unimaginable
adult delights, the last, last thing she saw
each night was her nurse's black, beloved face,
lit in the open doorway to night, angel
of the portal. If she had been bad,
let alone unrepentant, the ritual words
Alice had taught her were withheld, the token
for sleep, the dark's blessing: "Sweet dreams."
"No, no! Sweet dreams!" "Good night," said Alice,
creature of the light, implacable and just.
Panic pushed out tears. "No, no. Sweet *dreams!*"
And finally, in dignified mercy, "Sweet dreams," said Alice.
Sleep took the bed. So, early
and inadvertently, she learned words'

brute magic.

—Josephine Jacobsen

Lynch explained to the executives that the brunette from the limo, Rita, makes her way to an apartment complex carrying only a purse containing a hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars in cash and a blue key. Stricken with amnesia, she is befriended there by a perky blonde, Betty, who has just arrived from Canada and is determined to become a movie star. Betty tries to help Rita figure out who she is—even as the police, and Rita's less kindly pursuers, begin looking for her.

Then Lynch stopped, and finally lit his cigarette. "It was the best kind of pitch, where you're on the edge of your seat," Steve Tao said later. A short, partly bald thirty-five-year-old, Tao wears black knit shirts and small black glasses and has an orderly mind. "I remember the creepiness of this woman in this horrible, horrible crash, and David teasing us with the notion that people are chasing her. She's not just in trouble—she *is* trouble. Obviously, we asked, 'What happens next?' And David said, 'You have to buy the pitch for me to tell you.' " So the network did.

A successful pitch usually commands a few hundred thousand dollars in development money, but ABC was so eager to sign Lynch that it promptly put up four and a half million dollars for an unusual two-hour pilot. Disney's Touchstone television later contributed two and a half million more, for a total budget of seven million, with the proviso—which Lynch grudgingly accepted—that he shoot extra footage to be used as a "closed ending." Disney's Buena Vista International intended to recoup the company's money by releasing the longer version as a film in Europe.

The "Mulholland Drive" pitch was unusual not just because it was tantalizingly brief but because Lynch was candid about his intention to do something sui generis. Most television shows are sold as the offspring of previous hits, and targeted to their advertising demographics. Joss Whedon, the creator of the WB network hit "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," recalls, "We sold 'Buffy' as 'The X-Files' meets 'My So-Called Life.' They liked it because 'The X-Files' was a big hit, and because the kid audience buys a lot of shit."

Television is a bastion of tradition. Susanne Daniels, the president of entertainment at the WB, told me, "One reason we bought 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer' was that we had been talking about 'Kolchak: The Night Stalker' and how it was scary and funny at the same time, and we wanted to recapture that." Peter Roth, the president of Warner Bros. Television, says he often pages through television nostalgia books and circles shows that could be profitably updated. Proudly recalling one of his achievements when he was at Fox, Roth said, "I circled 'Kolchak,' and then had lunch with Chris Carter, and out of that conversation came 'The X-Files.' Every top-ten show has been seen before. The trick is to repackage and contemporize to make a modern hit. 'E.R.' is derived from the likes of 'Medical Center.' 'Ally McBeal' is 'The Mary Tyler Moore Show.' "

The urge to recycle can blind executives to the commercial potential of material that is truly new: NBC, CBS, and Fox all turned down "The Sopranos," which became a huge hit on HBO this spring. "The networks' main problem," says Dean Valentine, the president and C.E.O. of the United Paramount Network, "is that under perceived pressure from advertisers they're all chasing the eighteen-to-thirty-four demographic. Way too many shows are 'Friends' clones—urban, affluent, twenty-seven-year-old yuppies who wear black knit shirts and just want to get laid. Most of America doesn't fit that bill, and so they've defaulted to watching cable."

In a rapidly changing marketplace, the old formula of relying on the old formula is increasingly unreliable. The big three networks, which now attract less than fifty per cent of television viewers in prime time, may well be headed toward obsolescence. Steven Bochco, the respected producer who created "Hill Street Blues" and "N.Y.P.D. Blue," says, "I liken the networks to a guy who, as he loses more and more hair, invents a more and more elaborate comb-over in denial: 'We're stemming the tide.' 'No one else can do what we can do.' 'We still reach more people than anyone else.' Yap, yap, yap. In fact, we're getting our brains beaten out."

All the networks are seeking the rare

megahit—a show like "E.R.," which has earned NBC more than five hundred million dollars. Yet NBC turned down "E.R." three times before it ordered a pilot. After thirty-two years in the industry, Don Ohlmeyer, the recently retired president of NBC, West Coast, admits, "For a show to be a breakout hit, there has to be some magic that happens with the audience. But nobody knows what that is. Nobody fucking knows. If you bat a hundred in television, you're in the Hall of Fame." The shows that fail cost the networks tens of millions of dollars, and spectacular risks often backfire even more spectacularly. So every time network executives open their wallets to bet on a beguiling dark horse, as ABC did with "Mulholland Drive," their tension is palpable. As Jamie Tarses told me, "This is a terrifying time in television."

On January 4th, Lynch turned in a ninety-two-page pilot script to ABC. Like much of his work, "Mulholland Drive" was conceived as an oddball film noir, opening with some gruesome deaths and then introducing an ensemble of desirable women and baffled or misshapen men. Lynch had kept many of these strange men to himself at the pitch meeting, because, he says, Krantz worried that "getting into them would blow the deal." The most important, in the completed script, was an edgy young director named Adam, who is forced by a pair of mobsters to cast a particular actress in his new movie. (Adam appears to be a stand-in for Lynch, who is known to fear creative interference of any form. When Lynch was living with Isabella Rossellini, he refused to allow cooked food in the house, lest the smell contaminate his work.) Adam smashes up the mobsters' limo with a 7-iron, then hops into his silver Porsche and drives home to find his wife in bed with the pool man. He pours hot-pink paint in her jewelry box, gets cuffed around by the pool man, and must eventually take counsel from an oracular cowboy.

Meanwhile, Betty auditions for another film and gets so deeply into character that she gropes the sleazy actor reading with her. As Betty and Rita seek Rita's true identity, they stumble across a decomposing corpse. Also, a hit man named Joe accidentally shoots a fat woman through a wall. And two pals, Dan and Herb, meet for breakfast at Denny's to discuss Dan's recurrent nightmare of being frightened by a man who lives behind that same Denny's. They poke around in back, and a black-faced bum jumps out, literally frightening Dan to death.

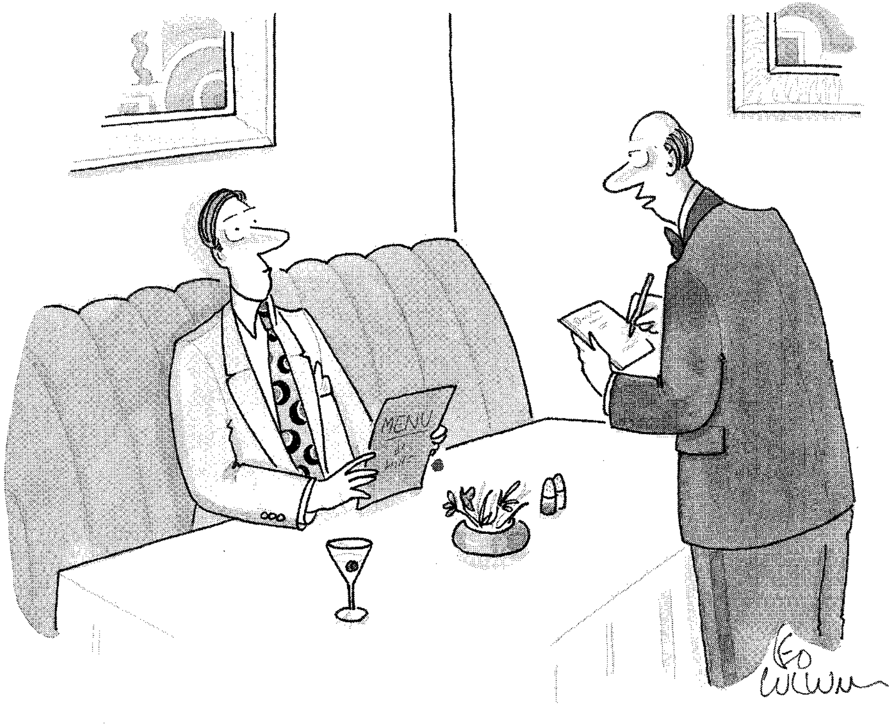
The day after receiving the script, Jamie Tarses and Stu Bloomberg, who is co-chairman of ABC Entertainment Television Group, called Tony Krantz to green-light production. "They were giddy with excitement," Krantz recalls. Steve Tao said, "It's one of the fastest scripts I've ever read—we could *see* it." ABC would eventually order pilots for seven dramatic series for the fall season, and the network expected to find room on its schedule for three or four. "Mulholland Drive" looked to be a shoo-in.

But the executives did wonder how the seemingly unconnected scenes and characters would be tied together. Lynch's scripts, dense with dream images, don't gather up loose ends and sweep to a close; instead, they jump around and then break off, as if jarred by an alarm clock. Although this strangeness was a selling point, it was also a cause for concern. "There's a very fine balance between intriguing people and confusing people," Steve Tao said. And so, two weeks after ordering the pilot episode, Bloomberg and Tarses summoned about twenty people from the network, Imagine, and Lynch's production company to meet in ABC's conference room.

At "notes meetings" like this one, networks begin to put their stamp on a show, analyzing everything from the characters' morals to their hair styles. Executives try to clarify motivations and future plot points: "What are the stakes? What is the character's arc?" They also ask, "Will there be a love story, a combative mating dance?" Most executives believe that television shows—unlike movies, which people actively seek out—are watched passively by a tired and fickle audience; and so stories should move quickly and clearly, and characters' problems should engender immediate sympathy. "The secret is to have a character who is very relatable, whom you root for," Jamie Tarses says. "And the rest is how you dress it up."

Tony Krantz considered the discussion normal and amicable: "At those meetings, you want to take signals from the buyer, and make compromises that satisfy them and that don't involve selling your soul to the devil." Steve Tao told me, "David was very collaborative. I had a list of twenty questions. He said, 'I'm not going to answer that, but it's a good question.' Next? 'I'm not going to answer that, but it's a good question.' Next? 'I know that answer, and you're *not* going to learn it now.' At least I knew he was thinking about our concerns."

Lynch didn't relish the scrutiny, however. "David is willing to attend something like that meeting as a gesture of



"The pompano poached in parchment is very alliterative tonight."

coöperation," Mary Sweeney says, "but he believes that questions about motivation are not pertinent." Lynch himself says, "A lot of times, I just didn't know what the answer was going to be, and I was covering up so that I wouldn't worry them."

What most worried the network was the last scene: the camera snakes around the Dumpster behind Denny's and finds the bum. "We move closer and the bum's face fills the screen," Lynch had written. "Its face is black with fungus. Its eyes turn and they seem to be red. THE END." ABC was afraid this scene signaled that Lynch was about to depart for his nutty private world of dwarfs and ladies in radiators and extraterrestrial freaks. They wanted to work with the controlled and grounded Lynch of "Blue Velvet" and the early "Twin Peaks," not the Lynch of his more recent "Lost Highway," a man bewitched by sex, violence, and alternate universes. Tao asked nervously, "Are his eyes glowing? Is he an alien?"

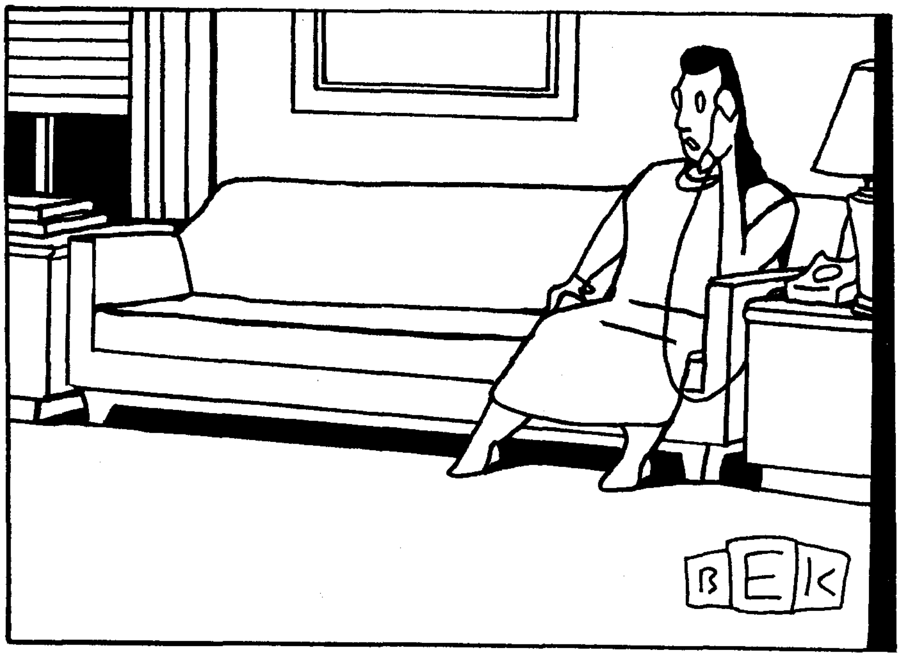
"No, no, no, no, no, no," Lynch said soothingly. "The bum's eyes are just catching a reflection from the neon. And with the black fungus around the eyes they just look . . . naturally pink."

Afterward, Lynch's producer, Neal Edelstein, said, "ABC thinks viewers are too stupid to want to figure things out, to have a bit of a surreal experience." When I pressed Lynch whether the bum's eyes really glowed only from reflected neon, he chuckled, and said, "Well, and maybe a few other things."

Lynch did hint to the executives that Adam and Betty would have a romance, which reassured them, and said that in the course of the first year Betty and Rita would "cross": Betty would be sucked into the city's underbelly, and Rita would be redeemed. And, in response to politely insistent queries, Lynch promised that when Rita's identity was finally revealed it would only open up other mysteries.

That was a further relief to ABC, which was eager not to repeat the mistakes of "Twin Peaks." When it first aired, in April, 1990, "Twin Peaks" had a 21.7 rating, or nearly twenty million viewers, and a whopping 33 share (meaning that a third of all televisions on at that hour were tuned to the show). But by the time the show was cancelled, a year later, it had fallen to a 5.7 rating and a 9 share. After the core mystery of "Who killed Laura Palmer?" had been solved, in the fifteenth episode (the murderer turned out to be Bob, a fiend inhabiting Laura's father), the plot petered out. "David was quite cognizant that on 'Twin Peaks' he'd written himself into a corner with Laura Palmer," Tao says. "We kept saying we can't have that happen again, because we want a long-running series."

Tony Krantz was also watching out that Lynch didn't get too esoteric. "When 'Twin Peaks' got fourteen Emmy nominations its first year," Krantz said, "ABC mistakenly felt that David and Mark"—the show's co-creator, Mark Frost—"were unassailable gods riding this unstoppable pop-culture wave. So they didn't say boo when the show stopped adhering to conventional storytelling and got all weird."



"I'm still a work-in-hiding."

ABC and Imagine were both unabashedly following Hollywood's conventional wisdom: if you want to achieve popular success with an artist, take whatever it is that makes that artist distinctive, dilute it, and add a spoonful of sugar. Brian Grazer, Imagine Television's other co-chairman, told me, "Television should bring out the best in David, because people want originality within a conventional format—if you change both format and content, become *too* original, as he has sometimes done, you go south."

As the pilot began filming, in late February, excitement about "Mulholland Drive" swept through Hollywood. "People are grovelling to be on the writing staff," Lynch's producer, Neal Edelstein, said. "It is *the* pilot." In March, Steve Tao told me, "We gave a presentation to the advertising community last week, and just the mere mention that David Lynch is coming back to television literally made them gasp!"

Yet privately the executives at ABC were increasingly nervous. That same week, Tony Krantz said, "Steve Tao is seeing the dailies"—each day's raw footage—"and saying, 'Oh, my God, we love it, we love it.' But then he said, 'What is it? What is it?' And when he saw some of the closed ending he said, 'What the fuck is it?' " (The closed ending features a Blue Lady and a magician who explodes in blue flames.)

ABC was also worried about pace: that speedy script seemed a bit plodding after it had been realized through Lynch's viewfinder. Justin Theroux, who plays Adam, brooded about the network's unease. "I realized that the show is incidental to the ads," Theroux said. "You could have someone fucking a chicken up there, and it doesn't matter to ABC—they just want people to watch the commercials. In 'Ally McBeal,' you start off with someone talking about a pet frog and some legal case about masturbation—lots of hooks to keep your interest. In 'Mulholland Drive,' you start off with seven minutes of a car accident, someone stumbling around dazed. I'm sure ABC is thinking, O.K., we've just lost *x* million viewers."

Nor was ABC happy about Lynch's lead actresses, Naomi Watts and Laura

Harring. Usually, a show's producers audition at least fifty actors for each major role, and then bring their three top contenders in to read for the network, at which point the producers and the executives cast the show together. But Lynch casts by scru-tinizing head-shot photographs and conducting interviews. Viewing actors as design elements, he often chooses unknowns with broad, blank faces.

"Sometimes the network can give too much respect to an artist," Tony Krantz said, "and ABC did that here, deferring to David without having any chance to see the actors read—to kick the tires. The actresses are fantastic-looking, fine talents, but they're a little old"—both are in their late twenties—"and ABC thinks Betty is too aw-shucks and Okie-from-Muskogee, and that at the beginning, after the accident, Rita looks kind of *goofy*."

The network communicated its anxieties, as is customary, through its standards-and-practices department, which vets shows for objectionable material. A ream of memos came Lynch's way: change "tits and ass" to "butts and boobs"; we shouldn't see the hit man's gun "blowing brains out across the desk, carpet and wall," or the next bullet piercing the wall and hitting the fat woman's buttocks. Then came the memo saying, Lose the closeup of dog turds on a sidewalk. Lynch prized that image (he'd told his cameraman, "Get real tight on this—every kid in America is going to love it!"), and he especially objected to this edict. "Show me someone who hasn't seen dog shit," he said. A compromise was finally negotiated: the poop would take up an eighth of the screen.

The standards-and-practices department was particularly disturbed by Lynch's reverence for cigarettes—for smoke and fire as a magical texture. "We don't like to condone smoking here at the network," Steve Tao explained. "He's found ways around it. Now it's mostly the bad people who smoke." Tao giggled self-consciously: "You smoke, you die." Indeed, the network decreed that characters who smoke should manifest "a hacking cough." Lynch did change the script so that it is Adam, and not a kindly landlady, who lights up, but in a scene shot after the network voiced its concern, Lynch told Justin Theroux, "Take a really fucking big drag—fucking *love* that cigarette."

Though Lynch remained fairly complaisant, he was concerned about ABC's small incursions on his reality. "If you purify out smoking and dog...problems on TV," he told me, "and you make a politically correct world, the artificiality eats into our perceptions of life. And no one will watch your show."

Lynch and ABC had fallen into the time-honored pattern of antagonism between the "talent" and the "suits." Executives view writers as unruly teen-agers; writers see executives as hysterical parents who, regrettably, still control allowances and bedtimes. To be sure, television's boundaries have broadened enormously since the early nineteen-seventies, when a CBS researcher told Allan Burns, the co-creator of "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," that there were four leprous castes that viewers would never accept as lead characters: divorced people, Jews, New Yorkers, and men with mustaches. But with network television—which, unlike cable, is regulated by the Federal Communications Commission—any plot point that might offend viewers remains touchy. A small child named Kenny dies a different awful death in each episode of the animated show "South Park," but that mordancy is possible only because the show airs on Comedy Central. "On a network," says Trey Parker, the show's co-creator, "Kenny would just keep getting an ear infection."

"N.Y.P.D. Blue" had its début on ABC a year later than had been planned, because Steven Bochco, the executive producer, had to fight endless battles over content. "It was exhausting," Bochco told me. "But we finally settled on a glossary of naughty words we could use—douche bag, scumbag, asshole, prick." He shook his head and laughed. "Eventually, we're going to win all these battles, with the pathetic argument that 'Shit, there's no one left watching us anyway—what do you care?' "

On a Monday in late April, David Lynch was in the studio of his three-building compound in the Hollywood Hills, mixing the soundtrack for the "Mulholland Drive" pilot. Cigarette smoke spiralled above his head as he sat at his Euphonix mixing console, cradling a bottomless cup of coffee. Brown draperies cloaked the walls of the soundproof hall, which doubles as a fourteen-seat screening room. Three sound technicians were perched around him, and everyone stared at a thirty-two-inch monitor as the opening frames of the pilot flickered by.

Lynch had just spent two hours deleting cricket chirps and rolling-hubcap clatter from the John Cage-like symphony that plays under the car-crash scene, choosing to emphasize instead steam hiss and the screams of the drag-racing kids. As the monitor showed Rita staggering downhill from the crash and turning toward Sunset Boulevard, Lynch said, "Give me a hint of the steam and a taste of the screaming kids. Real low, on infinite reverb." When these sounds were laid in, they made Rita seem not goofy but terrified.

Over the weekend, Lynch had sent his cut of the show, a work print with patchy temporary sound, both to Krantz and to ABC. The cut was two hours and five minutes, and had longueurs, but on the whole it was spooky, funny, and absorbing. Justin Theroux gave Adam a gaunt, raspy wit that made his scenes bounce. Robert Forster was memorable as a deadpan cop. And there was a handful of indelible images: a boy with metal crutches and piercing blue eyes; a bloated corpse lying in a sea of blood; and, particularly, the sepulchral appearance of the pinheaded Mr. Roque.

That morning, sitting in a battered-looking director's chair in his woodshop after a meditation session, Lynch had told me, "It works. I really love it, and Tony's over the moon. I'd like ABC to run it at two and a half hours, but apparently Jamie and Stu are freaking out, saying it has to be eighty-eight minutes."

Now Lynch was laying sound for the scene in which the bum gives Dan a heart attack. He tracked in a "stinger"—a pulse of hard-hitting sound—timed to the instant when the bum jumps out, and then watched the result. "That's total horseshit!" he shouted. "Put it in the trash!" But moments later he was murmuring to his sound engineer, "That's a peach, Walter."

"Lose that arbitrary drum hit?"

"No, no! Arbitrary is our friend!"

The intercom buzzed: Tony Krantz was on line one. Lynch picked up and said, "Hey, Tone," then just listened. "Frankly," Krantz told me later, explaining the reason for his call, "I've never heard of a two-and-a-half-hour opener. It's kind of crazy. These people at ABC are used to forty-four minutes"—the length of an hour pilot without commercials—"so they keep looking at their watches, waiting for the fucking thing to end." But Krantz stayed calm while talking to Lynch, trying to finesse the situation.

"The question is, how much do they love it?" Lynch said into the receiver at last. Krantz told him that Steve Tao wasn't sanguine. "What do you mean, 'He's not loving it'?" Lynch asked. "I don't want Steve Tao's subjective judgment to hurt something that I know will thrill people. It's not four hours long, it's not meandering and shapeless, it's *feature length*. If Michael Eisner"—Disney's chairman—"saw this, I can't believe he wouldn't dig it." Krantz told Lynch it would only alienate ABC if they tried to do an end run and show the tape to Eisner.

The intercom buzzed again: Stu Bloomberg and Jamie Tarses were on line seven. Lynch explained to Krantz and switched over. "Hey," he said, and listened for several minutes. "Right, right," he said, finally. "I thought you would love this so much you'd put it in a two-and-a-half-hour time slot. That would be a beautiful thing. See, I love it. And Tony genuinely loves it. I think it's not slow, it's not boring. It's my pace. 'Twin Peaks' moved slowly, too. And there aren't any sound effects in what you saw, and that slows it down."

The three technicians slipped out of the room. "I know television has a different pace," he said, his voice rising slightly, "and I hear that you're saying it's got to go into the format. But I have a pace, too. And the only way I can think of to get it down to eighty-eight minutes is to start removing scenes in their entirety and end it earlier." Then Lynch asked, "So, Jamie, are you leaning toward this being a series, or are you disappointed and just want to can it?" He tilted his head and said, "Obviously, I got some thinking to do. O.K., swingin'."

Lynch stood up and walked back to sit in the central black-cushioned theatre seat. He drummed his fingers on the cherry-colored armrest, then gave me a slow, sweet smile. "Well, on a scale of ten they were about a three. A three, *maybe*. I'm one depressed cowboy. They'll call back tomorrow and have more sharpened"—he paused, grimacing—"scissors. But they were slippery. They don't really know what to think until other people see it—the audience testing." He stared forlornly at the blank movie screen. Snippets of the audio mix looped on through the wall speakers: gunshots, the metallic crunch of the car crash, screams in infinite reverb. "Damn," Lynch said. "They hated it."

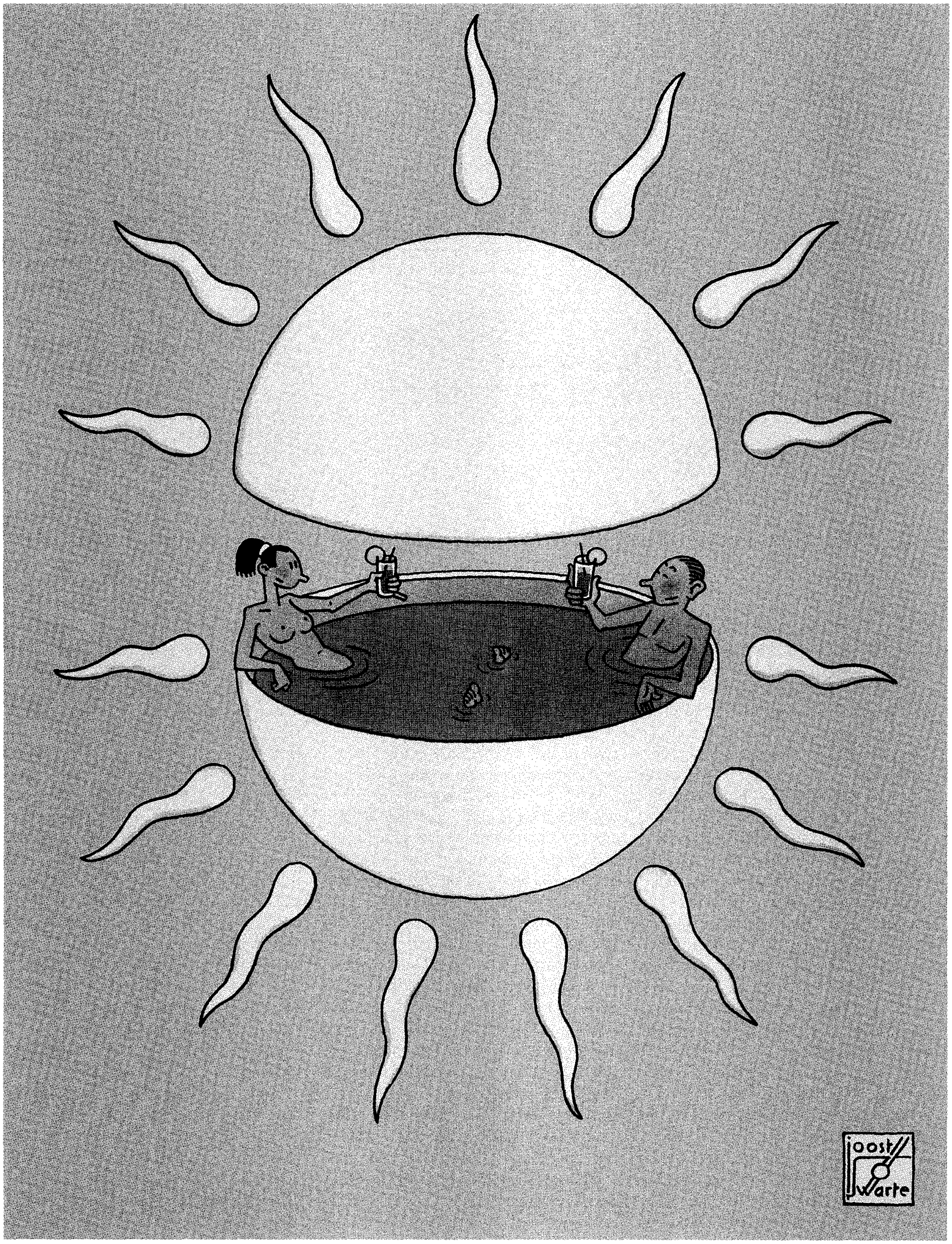
The following evening, Tony Krantz drove his silver Porsche to Lynch's house and walked up the steps carrying two bottles of Château Lynch-Bages. It was an old joke between them that if Krantz arrived without wine it meant bad news. Krantz and Lynch and Sweeney settled down in the living room, with its polished gray stucco walls and Danish modern furniture, and they drank the wine and looked out over the Hollywood Hills to the lights of Santa Monica. At last, Lynch said he had decided to lose the surplus thirty-seven minutes by simply cutting from the end. What he edited out would be saved for the first episode of the series.

Krantz, who carried a memo from Steve Tao with thirty-odd instructions on what the network wanted cut or "paced up," expressed strong disagreement. "ABC and Disney had put seven million dollars into the show," Krantz told me later, "and simply cutting the last thirty-seven minutes contradicted the spirit of ABC's notes entirely and would have been a slap in their faces. If you're a professional, you don't flagrantly tell the buyer to fuck off."

Krantz began to read Tao's memo aloud. Lynch objected to each note, and after ninety minutes of heated discussion they had covered only the first three points. Lynch believed that the "creative control" clause in his contract was equivalent to his having "final cut" authority in a film; in fact, that contract was with Imagine, not with the network. That night, Krantz told Lynch, "Ultimately,

SKETCHBOOK BY JOOST SWARTE

FUN IN THE SUN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"Don't play hide-and-seek with me, Beverly! Because I always win."

• •

ABC has creative control. And their ultimate creative control is to say, 'We pass.' "

"The way we were going at it was ridiculous," Krantz says. "So I said, 'David, who cares, ultimately, whether we speed up Rita's pace in getting to Hollywood? Let's not have this terrible tsuris about whether your artistic vision is being compromised a little—we're still going to do something fantastic.' "

Lynch began to laugh: "So, nothing matters, and it's all shit at the end of the day? You're really convincing me, Tone." Lynch finally promised to think over what he called "Tony's stern talking-to." But Krantz had self-doubts of his own. "Around David, I sometimes get frustrated by my own linearity," he says. "I think, Have I become too conservative? Have I become like Aaron Spelling"—the producer of such shows as "The Love Boat" and "Melrose Place"—"where my instinct has become the TV instinct, prizing what works instead of what I believe?"

So Krantz was surprised when Lynch called him the next day and said that he and Sweeney had stayed up all night and trimmed the whole story down to eighty-eight minutes. "I don't agree with the cuts," he said, "but I've made them."

"You're kidding!" Krantz told him. "That brings tears to my eyes."

Lynch had refused to read the rest of ABC's instructions—"I have a problem with notes," he told me—but afterward Sweeney looked the memo over and said they had addressed almost all of Tao's concerns: gone was the Denny's scene, and almost every scene featuring a character who appears only once, including the boy with the metal crutches. ABC had wanted the pilot to end on a shot of Rita's blue key, but Lynch kept his final image of the red-eyed bum, even though, without the Denny's scene, it was now utterly enigmatic. "I whacked away to make this fat man fit in a real little phone booth, trying to answer their concerns about pace," Lynch said the day after he'd done the editing, his chin stubbled and his eyes weary. "They want things to move fast, but it's like waterskiing: when you go fast, you stay on top—you never get below the surface."

Rolling a cigarette butt to shreds between his fingers, Lynch offered another analogy. "See, a pilot plants seeds, and you get excited by the little seeds that are starting to sprout. A lot of our seeds got crushed and butchered out, and what you end up with is a sick little garden. But obviously I'd rather lose seeds than lose the whole series." He sighed. "It's a heartache, but we're playing ball over here."

Krantz preferred the short version, believing that it was more accessible. "I hope ABC will pick it up now," he told me. "They'd be fools not to recognize the commercial potential." The cuts did make the pilot faster and more focussed. But in truth the version edited to be more like television had become, paradoxically, less necessary as television. What had distinguished it was gone: scenes that weren't immediately fathomable, pauses and puzzles and lingerings, a pervading sense of a powerful and idiosyncratic mind at work. Without the virtues of its apparent faults, "Mulholland Drive" was no longer what ABC had gambled on nine months earlier.

DURING the third week in May, all the networks make expensive, theatrical presentations of their prime-time schedules to the advertising community in New York City. ABC's presentation was held on May 18th, before a packed house at the New Amsterdam Theatre, in Times Square—the home of Disney's long-running musical "The Lion King." It began with a peppy dance tribute to ABC's lineup, which featured a giant Rockettes-style kick line. Before long, Jamie Tarses walked out in a pin-striped suit and read confidently from a teleprompter, promising the advertisers that ABC's lineup was already surpassingly strong and stable, and therefore the network would premiere only six new programs. She started to announce the new schedule, and each night's lineup was concluded with a fifteen-second perp walk across the stage by the stars and future stars and soon-to-be-cancelled would-be stars of that night's shows. Then the downtown magician David Blaine rose from beneath the stage in a coffin and did some of his glum card tricks.

At last, Tarses got to the schedule for Thursday, which was where Krantz thought "Mulholland Drive" should go, as counter-programming to the NBC juggernaut of "Friends" and "E.R." Tarses began by making some of the same points that Krantz had made to the network. "NBC is down eighteen per cent on Thursday night," she said, adding that "we're going to go young, we're going to go bold, and we're going to go up." ABC's plan was to please advertisers by lowering the median age of the network's viewers, which currently stands at forty-one—well above the coveted demographic of eighteen to thirty-four. (Fox's median age is thirty-three; the WB's is twenty-six.)

ABC went with Krantz's argument, but not with his show. Instead, its strategy for "going young" on Thursdays was to air a new drama called "Wasteland" at 9 P.M. "Wasteland" was created by Kevin Williamson, the writer responsible for the "Scream" movies and the WB's popular show "Dawson's Creek." At the New Amsterdam Theatre, Tarses rolled a few minutes of tape that showed six twenty-somethings living in New York City, wearing black knit shirts, gliding around to the Smash Mouth song "All Star," and contriving to have sex with one another. In a weak year for new shows, "Wasteland" is distinguished chiefly by its similarity to such other new "Friends" clones as Fox's "Time of Your Life" (five twenty-somethings in New York), the WB's "D.C." (five twenty-somethings in Washington), the WB's "Jack & Jill" (six twenty-somethings in New York), and NBC's "Cold Feet" (three twenty-something couples somewhere or other).

Stu Bloomberg ended the prime-time presentation by rising from David Blaine's coffin—not, perhaps, the best metaphor for this crowd—to make a final, halfhearted "Star Wars" pun: "May the sales force be with you!" Afterward, the buyers and analysts walked through a steady rain to a cocktail reception held under a large white tent in Bryant Park. The more exuberant among them got in line to have their pictures taken with Drew Carey or Michael J. Fox.

I found Steve Tao and asked him what had happened to "Mulholland Drive." He looked sheepish. "Well," he said, "it needs a little work." So it might be a midseason replacement? "Sure, yep, possibly." He turned away.

Five days earlier, Tony Krantz had received a phone call from Tao. Krantz had heard rumors that ABC would not pick up the pilot, but he still hoped that the network would select the show for midseason, the way it had done with "Twin Peaks." "It's going to be a pass," Tao told him. "I'm sorry."

Krantz immediately phoned Lynch. "They don't want it," Krantz said. "They don't want it for fall, and they don't want it for spring."

"I see," Lynch said.

Later, Krantz told me, "I think David was surprised. He's an artist. And when someone tells you, 'The thing you love, we don't love; we don't value your inner life'—that's very personal."

When the show's cast and crew learned of its demise, they were outraged. Justin Theroux had turned down a chance to be in "Wasteland" in order to work with Lynch on "Mulholland Drive." Yet he believes that he chose well, because he learned a salutary contempt for how television shows are chosen. "I want to say that the people at ABC are terrible, awful, heinous people who kiss up to you when they think you might be a star and then drop you like a hot turd when they decide you won't be," he said. "But really they're just terribly frightened people who want to keep their jobs by giving audiences what they want. The audience testing that the networks do is in Middle America, and I picture these men and women who spend their time in McDonald's and bent over slot machines being brought into a room in a mall to watch David Lynch and turn up their knobs if they like it. Those knobs are going to be arrowheaded to the ground. On that basis, ABC assumes that America wants 'Wasteland' and not 'Mulholland Drive,' which means that they assume America is stupid. The sad thing is they're probably right."

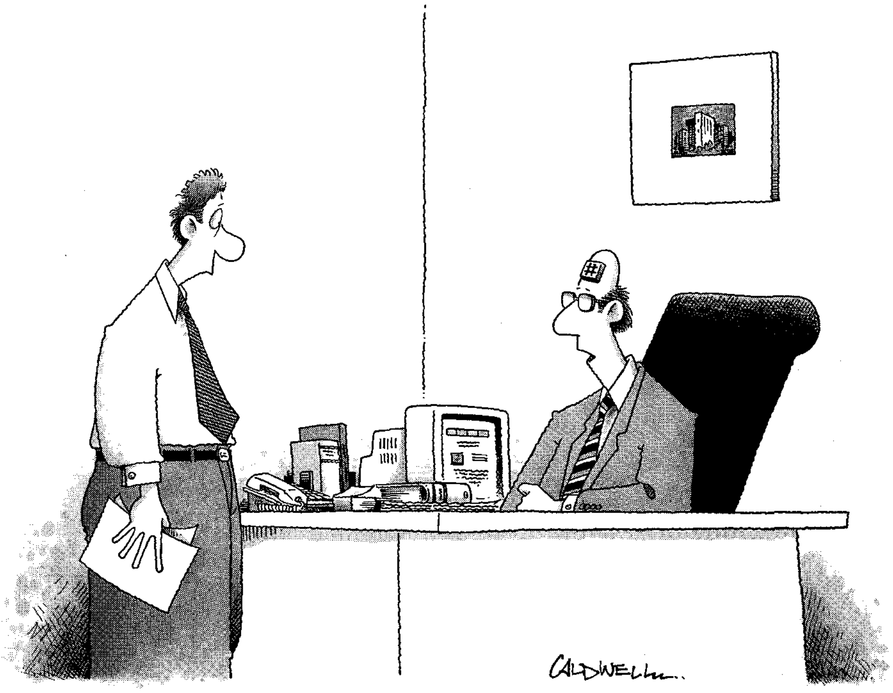
A few weeks later, I visited Lynch at home, in his woodshop. I asked him how he felt about ABC's rejection. He pushed his index fingers against his lower lip and remained in a brown study for a full two minutes. He rose and hit the intercom to request a cup of coffee, sat and thought for thirty seconds more, and finally said, "At a certain point, you realize you're in with the wrong people. Their thinking process is very foreign to me. They like a fast pace and a linear story, but you want your creations to come out of *you*, and be distinctive. I feel it's possibly true that there are aliens on earth, and they work in television."

ABC plans to air "Mulholland Drive" later this season as a two-hour TV movie that sets its plot lines in action and then abruptly stops. Lynch dreads the broadcast. "Having that butchered version go out … it's like an accident," he said. "Some people love to see a sad, bad traffic accident, and that's what they'll see on ABC. I hope no one watches."

I asked him if he thought that the "Twin Peaks" pilot would get picked up today. "I kind of doubt it," he replied.

What if Tony Krantz came back in a few years, carrying a case of Lynch-Bages, and suggested that they take another crack at a TV show?

Lynch smiled faintly: "He'd have to be wearing some protective gear." He took a drag on his cigarette. "We don't talk about television anymore." ♦



"If you require immediate assistance, press the pound sign."

QUINTERO/MILLENIUM

FICTION

HYGIENE

BY JULIAN BARNES

“RIGHT, that’s it, me boy.” His kit bag was stowed between the seats, his mackintosh folded beside him. Ticket, wallet, sponge bag, rubber johnnies, tasks list. Tasks bloody list. He held an eyes-front as the train pulled out. None of that soppy stuff for him: the lowered window, the waving hankie, the piping of the eye. Not that you could lower the window anymore—you just sat in these cattle trucks with other old fools on cheap tickets and stared out through sealed glass. And not that Pamela would be there if he did look. She’d already be in the car park grinding down the wheel rims on the concrete curb as she tried to maneuver the Astra closer to the token-slot thingy. She always complained that the men who designed the barriers didn’t realize that women had shorter arms than men. He said that that was no excuse for playing argy-bargy with the curb; if you couldn’t reach you should just get out, woman. Anyway, that’s where she’d be by now, torturing the tire as her personal part in the battle of the sexes. And she was there already because she didn’t want to see him not looking at her from the train. And he was not looking at her from the train because she did insist on adding to his tasks bloody list at the last bloody moment.

So: Stilton from Paxton’s as per. Selection of cottons, needles, zips, and buttons as per. Rubber rings for Kilner jars as per. Elizabeth Arden loose powder as per. Fine as per. But each year there was something she remembered at D Day minus thirty seconds, something designed to make him go poling across town on some wild-goose chase. Find another glass to replace the one that got broken—read, the one that you, Major Jacko Jackson, retired, broke in a deliberate and malicious fashion after going heavy on the gargling juice. Vain to point out that it was the sort of glass that had gone out of stock even before we bought it secondhand. This year it was, Go to the big John Lewis in Oxford Street and see if they sell the outside bit of the salad spinner, which sustained a life-threatening crack when it got dropped by Mister Someone, because the inside still works all right and they might just sell the outside bowl separately. And there in the car park she’d been waving the guts of it at him so that he could take it with him and not buy the wrong size or whatever. Practically trying to force it into his kit bag. Aagh.

Still, she made good coffee, he’s always given her that. He set the flask on the table and unwrapped the foil package. Choccy biccies. Jacko’s choccy biccies. He still thought of them like that. Was this right or wrong? Were you as young as you felt or as old as you looked? That was the great question nowadays, it seemed to him. Maybe the only one. He poured himself some coffee and munched a biscuit. The soft, familiar gray-green English landscape calmed him, then cheered him. Sheep, cattle, trees blown into hair styles. A loitering canal. Put that canal on a charge, Sarnt-Major. Yes*sah*.

He was rather pleased with this year's postcard. A ceremonial sword in its scabbard. Subtle, that, he thought. Time was when he'd sent cards of field guns and famous Civil War battlefields. Well, he'd been younger then. "Dear Babs, Dinner's on the 17th. Keep the afternoon free. Yours ever, Jacko." Quite straightforward. Never did anything like put it in an envelope. Principles of Concealment, Section 5b, Paragraph 12: The enemy is seldom likely to spot anything placed directly in front of its face. He didn't even bother to go into Shrewsbury. Just bunged the card in the village box.

Were you as young as you felt or as old as you looked? The ticket collector, or inspector, or train manager, or whatever they called him nowadays, hadn't given him a glance. Just saw a senior citizen's midweek excursion return and read him as a piece of no trouble, no interest, some cheapskate who brought his own coffee as a way of saving money. Well, that was true. The pension didn't stretch as far as it had at first. He'd long ago given up his subscription to the club. Apart from the annual regimental dinner, he needed to go up to town only if his gnashers went wrong and he didn't trust the local vet to fix them. Made far more sense to stay in a B. and B. near the station. If you had the full works for breakfast, managed to play your cards right and sneak an extra sausage, you were set up for the day. Same again on the Friday and that would get you through till you got home. Back to base. Reporting for duty, all salad spinners present and correct, Ma'am.

No, he wouldn't think of that yet. This was his annual leave. His two days of furlough. He'd had his hair cut as per. Had the blazer cleaned as per. He was an orderly man, with orderly expectations and pleasures. Even if those pleasures were not as strong as they once had been. Different, let's say. As you got older, your head for the sauce wasn't what it used to be. You couldn't tie one on like in the old days. So you drank less, enjoyed it more, and ended up just as newted and owly as before. Well, that was the principle. Didn't always work, of course. And the same with Babs. How he remembered that first go-round, all those years ago. Surprising he did, given his condition at the time. And that was another thing, being newted and owly didn't seem to make any difference to the honorable member then. Three times. You old dog, Jacko. Once to say Hullo, once the real business, then once more for the road. Well, why else did they sell rubber johnnies in packets of three? A week's supply for some chaps, no doubt, but when you'd been saving it up as he had . . .

True, the honorable member wasn't up to the three-card trick anymore. Once was probably quite enough if you had your senior citizen's rail card. Wouldn't do to strain the ticker. And the idea of Pamela having to face something like that . . . No, he had no intention of straining the ticker. The ceremonial sword in its scabbard, and just a half-bottle of champagne between the two of them. They used to get through a whole bottle in the old days. Now it was just a half—something on special offer from that Thresher's near the station—and they often didn't finish it. Babs got heartburn easily and he didn't want to be too kiboshed for the regimental dinner. Mostly they talked. Sometimes they slept.

He didn't blame Pamela. Some women just went off it after the change. Simple matter of biology, nobody's fault. Just a question of female wiring. You set up a system, the system produces what it's designed for—namely, sprog manufacture, witness Jennifer and Chris—and then it shuts itself down. Old Mother Nature stops lubricating the parts. No surprise, given that Old Mother Nature is decidedly of the female persuasion. So he wasn't to blame, either. All he was doing was making sure that *his* machinery was still in working order. Old Father Nature still lubricating the parts. A matter of hygiene, really.

Yes, that was right. He was straight with himself about it. No weasel words. Couldn't exactly discuss it with Pam, but as long as you could look yourself full in the shaving mirror. He wondered if those chaps he'd sat opposite at the dinner a couple of years ago could do that. The way they'd talked. A lot of the old mess rules had gone, of course, or were just ignored, and those little turkey cocks had been pretty much rat-faced by the start of the dinner and had started maligning the fair sex before the port was passed. He'd have put them on a charge himself. The regiment had taken on a few too many clever dicks lately, in his opinion. And he had had to listen to three of them holding forth as if the wisdom of the ages were at their beck and call. "Marriage is a question of what you can get away with," the ringleader had said, and the others had nodded in agreement. This wasn't what had stuck in his craw, however. It was when the fellow had gone on to explain—or, more exactly, boast—how he'd taken up again with an old girlfriend, someone from back before he'd met his wife. "Doesn't count," one of the other clever dicks had replied. "Preëxisting adultery. Doesn't count." Jacko had taken his while to work that one out, and when he did he didn't much like what he understood by it. Weasel words.

Had he been like that, back when he'd met Babs? No, he didn't think so. He didn't try to pretend that things weren't what they were. He didn't say to himself, Oh, it's because I was all newted and owly at the time, or, Oh, it's because Pam is like she is nowadays. Nor did he say, Oh, it's because Babs is blond and I've always gone for blondes, which is odd because Pam's a brunette, unless of course it isn't odd at all. Babs was a nice girl, she was there, she was blond, and they'd rung the gong three times that night. There wasn't more to it than that. Except that he'd remembered her. He'd remembered her, and the following year he'd found her again.

The following year he couldn't be sure she'd remembered him, but even so she'd been pleased to see him. He'd brought a bottle of champagne on the off-chance, and that had somehow sealed things. He'd stayed the whole afternoon, told her about himself, and they'd rung the gong three times again. He'd said that he'd send her a postcard when he was up in town next, and that's how it had got going. And now it was—what?—twenty-two, twenty-three years? He'd brought her flowers on their tenth anniversary, a potted plant on their twentieth. A poinsettia. The thought of her kept him going on those bleak mornings when he went out to feed the pullets and scrape away at the coal bunker. She was—what was that phrase?—his window of opportunity. She'd tried to end it once—go into retirement, she'd joked—but he hadn't let her. He'd insisted, come close to making a scene. She'd given in, and stroked his face, and the next year when he'd sent his card he'd been scared fartless, but Babs had been as good as her word.

Of course they'd changed. Everyone changed. Pamela, for a start: the children going, the garden, the thing she'd developed about dogs, the way she'd cut her hair as short as the lawn, the way she was always cleaning the house—not that it seemed to him any different from how it had been before she'd started always cleaning it. The way she'd stopped wanting to go anywhere, said she'd done her travelling. He'd said they had time on their hands now: but they did and they didn't. They had more time and they got less done, that was the truth of the matter. And they weren't idle, either.

He'd changed, too. The way he found himself getting scared when he was up a ladder cleaning out the gutters. He'd done it for twenty-five years, for God's sake, it was top of his tasks list every spring, and with a bungalow he was never that far off the ground, but he still found himself scared. Not scared of falling off, it wasn't that. He always pushed down the side locks on the ladder, he didn't suffer from vertigo, and he knew that if he fell he'd probably land on the grass. It was just that as he stood there, nose a few inches above the gutter, scraping at the moss and sodden leaves and stuff with a trowel, shifting the twigs and bits of attempted bird's nest, looking up to check for broken tiles and see that the TV aerial was still standing to attention—as he stood there, all protected, Wellington boots on his feet, Windcheater around him, woolly cap on his head, and rubber gloves on his hands, he would sometimes feel the tears begin and he knew it wasn't because of the wind, and then he'd get stuck, one rubber hand clamped to the guttering, the other one pretending to poke into the curve of thick plastic, and he'd be scared fartless. Of the whole damn thing.

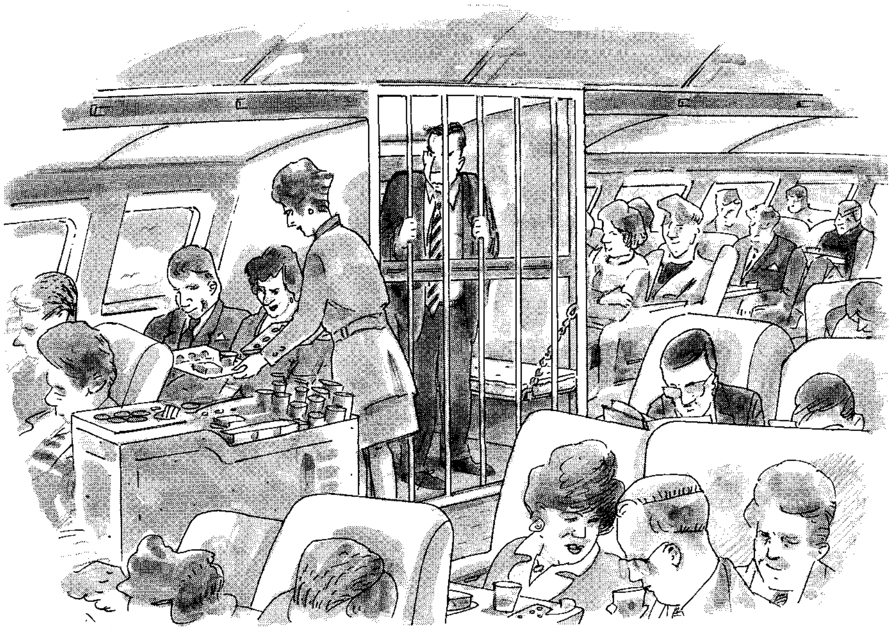
He liked to think that Babs never changed, and she didn't, not in his mind, not in his memory or his anticipation. But at the same time he acknowledged that her hair was no longer quite the blond it had once been. And after he'd persuaded her not to go into retirement she'd changed, too. Didn't like undressing in front of him. Kept her nightie on. Got heartburn from his champagne. One year he'd brought her the more expensive sort but the result was still the same. Turned out the light more and more. Didn't quite make the effort she once had to get him started. Slept when he slept, sometimes before.

But she was still what he looked forward to when he was feeding the pullets, scraping the coal, poking at the gutter with tears leaking, tears he smeared across his cheekbones with the back of a rubber glove. She was his link to the past, to a past in which he could really tie one on and still ring the gong three times in a row. She could get a bit mumsy with him, but everyone needed that, too, didn't they? Choccy biccy, Jacko? Yes, a bit of that. But also, You're a real man, you know that, Jacko? There aren't that many real men around, they're a dying breed, but you're one of them.

They were approaching Euston. A young chappie across from Jacko took out his bloody mobile phone and dialled pippily. “Hello, darling. . . . Yes, listen, bloody train's stuck somewhere outside bloody Birmingham. They don't tell you anything. No, at least an hour more, I'd say, and then I've got to get across London. . . . Yes. . . . Yes, do that. . . . Me, too. . . . Bye.” He tucked away his phone and stared at Jacko, as if daring him to have overheard.

So: run through the orders for the day again. Station, ring John Lewis re early strike on salad spinner. Dinner at one of those restaurants near the B. and B.: Indian, Turkish, didn't matter. Maximum expenditure eight pounds. The Marquis of Granby, two pints maximum, don't want to keep the billet awake with too many flushings in the night. Breakfast, extra sausage if poss. Half-bottle champagne from Thresher's. Errands: Stilton as per, Kilner rings as per, loose powder as per. Two o'clock, Babs. Even the thought of it . . . Captain, art thou sleeping there below? Honorable members kindly rise. . . . The ceremonial sword in its scabbard. Two until six. Tea at some point. Tea and a biccy. Funny how that had become part of the tradition, too. And Babs was so good at encouraging a fellow, making him feel just for a moment, even in the dark, even with his eyes shut, just for a moment that he was . . . what he wanted to be.

“RIGHT, that's it, me boy. Home James, and don't spare the horses.” His kit bag was stowed between the seats, his mackintosh folded beside him. Ticket, wallet, sponge bag, tasks list now with little neat ticks appended. Rubber johnnies! That particular joke had been on him. The whole thing had been a joke on him. He did an eyes-right through the sealed window: an overlit sandwich bar, a stalled baggage train, a porter in a silly uniform. Why



COURTESY CONFINEMENT

M.K.Brown

do train drivers never have children? Because they always pull out on time. Ho bloody ho. Putting rubber johnnies on the list had become his annual joke because he hadn't needed any. Not for years. Babs, once she knew and trusted him, said they didn't need to bother. He'd asked, What about the other thing, namely sprog manufacture. She'd replied, "Jacko, I think the danger of that's well past."

It had all gone as per to begin with, *per* as in perfect. Train on time, pole across town to John Lewis, no spare parts alas sold separately, but special offer, probably cheaper now than when Madam bought it. Debate with self about whether to discard guts of salad spinner at point of purchase and claim he'd managed to locate and supply outer bowl by itself. Decision made to present whole item of matériel on return. After all, old Slippery Hands might celebrate one evening by dropping the insides of the thing for a change. Except that, knowing his luck, he'd probably smash the bowl again and they'd be stockpiling guts for the rest of their existence.

Back across town. Recognized and remembered by foreign chappie who ran the B. and B. Coin in slot, report to base re safe arrival. Very decent chicken curry. Two pints, no more no less, at the Marquis of Granby. Discipline maintained. No undue pressure on bladder and prostate. Night surmounted with only the one visit to the latrines. Slept like the proverbial toddler. Sweet-talked way to extra sausage the next morning. Special offer on half of champagne at Thresher's. Tasks list accomplished with no hitch or glitch. Wash and brushup, toothpaste duty. Presented self for inspection at two o'clock sharp.

And that was when the special offers had run out. He'd rung the bell picturing the familiar blond curls and pink housecoat, hearing the giggles. But someone dark and artificial and middle-aged had answered the door. He stood there puzzled, not speaking.

"Present for me?" she'd said, probably just making conversation, and had reached out and taken the champagne by its neck. Instead of replying, he'd hung on to the bottle, and they'd had a silly tug-of-war until he said, "Babs."

"Babs'll be a little while," she said, opening the door wider. This didn't seem right, but he followed her into the sitting room, which had been redecorated since this time last year. Redecorated like a whore's parlor, he'd thought.

"Shall I put that in the fridge?" she'd asked, but he held on to the bottle.

"Up from the country?" she'd asked.

"Military gentleman?" she'd asked.

"Cat got your tongue?" she'd asked.

They sat in silence for a quarter of an hour, until he heard one door close, then another. The dark-haired woman now stood in front of him with a tall blonde whose bra presented her tits to him like a fruit bowl.

"Babs," he'd repeated.

"I'm Babs," the blonde replied.

"You're not Babs," he'd said.

"If you say so," she'd replied.

"You're not Babs," he'd repeated.

The two women had looked at each other, and the blonde had said, in a casual, hard way, "Look, Grandpa, I'm whoever you want, right?"

He stood up. He looked at the two tarts. He explained, slowly, so that any wet-eared recruit could understand.

"Oh," one of them said. "You mean Nora."

"Nora?"

"Well, we called her Nora. I'm sorry. No, she passed on about nine months ago."

He hadn't understood. He thought they meant that she'd moved. Then he hadn't understood again. He thought they meant that she'd been murdered, killed in a car crash or something.

"She was rather elderly," one of them said eventually, by way of explanation. He must have looked fierce, because she'd added, rather nervously, "No offense. Nothing personal."

They'd opened the champagne. The dark woman brought the wrong glasses. He and Babs had always drunk out of tumblers. The champagne was warm.

"I sent a postcard," he said. "A ceremonial sword."

"Yes," they answered, not interested.

They drained their glasses. The dark woman said, "Well, do you still want what you've come for?"

He didn't exactly think about it. He must have nodded. The blond girl said, "Do you want me to be Babs?"

Babs had been Nora. That was what went through his brain. He felt himself grow fierce again. "I want you to be who you are," he had shouted.

The two women looked at each other again. The blond girl said, firmly but not convincingly, "I'm Debbie."

He should have left then. He should have left out of respect for Babs, out of loyalty to Babs.

On the other side of the sealed window the landscape went by, as it did every year, but he could find no shape in it. Sometimes he confused loyalty to Babs with loyalty to Pamela. He reached into his kit bag for the thermos. Sometimes—oh, only a few times, but it had happened—he'd confused fucking Babs with fucking Pamela. It was as if he'd been at home. As if that happened at home.

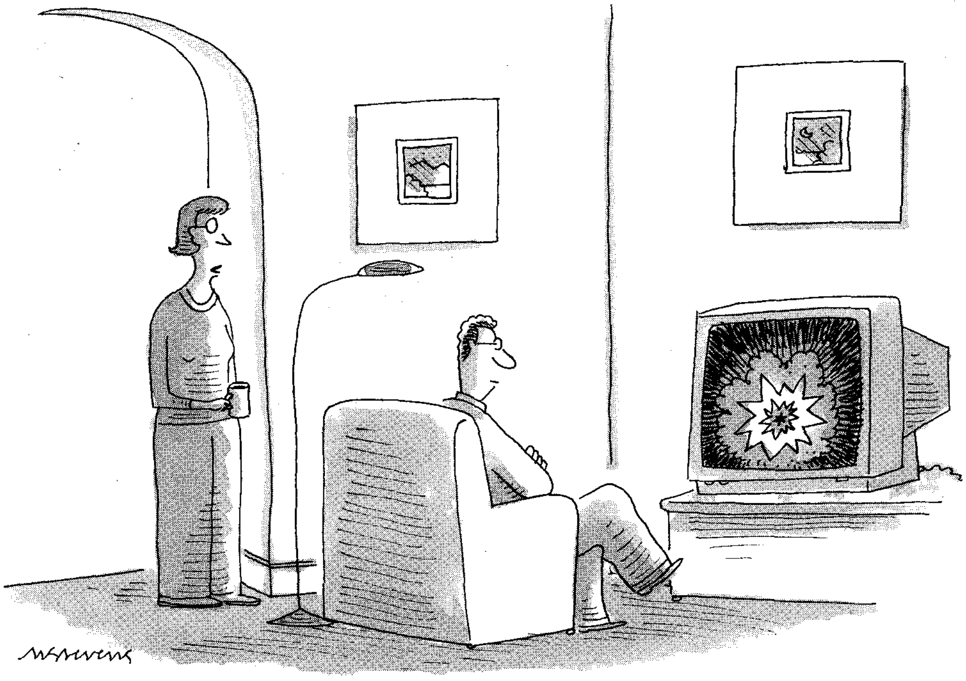
He'd gone into what used to be Babs's room. Redecorated, too. He couldn't take in what was new, only what was missing from before. She'd asked him what he wanted. He hadn't replied. She'd taken some money and handed him a rubber johnny. He'd stood there holding it. Babs hadn't. Babs wouldn't. . . .

"Want me to put it on for you, Gramps?"

He'd batted her hand away and dropped his trousers, then his underpants. He knew he wasn't thinking well, but it seemed to be the best idea, the only idea. It was what he'd come for, after all. It was what he'd paid for now. The honorable member was hiding his light under a bushel, but it seemed that if he indicated what was required, if he gave the orders, then . . . He sensed Debbie watching him, half standing, one knee on the bed.

He squidgy-fingered the johnny onto his cock, expecting the action to bump-start it. He looked at Debbie, at the offered fruit bowl, but that was no help. He looked down at his limp cock, at the wrinkled johnny with its drooping, unfillable teat. He felt the memory of lubricated rubber on his fingertips. He thought to himself, Right, that's it, me boy.

She had pulled a handful of tissues from the quilted box on the bedside table and handed them across. He dried his face. She gave him a little of his money back; just a little. He dressed quickly and walked out into the blinding streets. He wandered around pointlessly. A digital display above some shop told him that it was three o'clock. He



"Is this the movie of the week or the news of the day?"

realized that the johnny was still on his cock.

Sheep. Cows. A tree blown into a hair style. A stupid bloody little encampment of bungalows full of stupid cunts who made him want to scream and puke and pull the alarm cord or whatever the fuck they had instead of the alarm cord now-adays. Stupid cunts like himself. And he was going back to his own stupid bloody little bungalow that he'd spent so many years doing up. He unscrewed the thermos and poured himself some coffee. Two days in the flask and stone cold. In days of yore he used to liven it up with the contents of a hip flask. Now it was just cold, cold and old. Fair enough, eh, Jacko?

He'd have to give another coat of yacht varnish to the decking outside the French windows because it kept getting scuffed up by those new patio chairs. . . . The utility room could do with a lick of paint. . . . He'd take the mower in and have the blades sharpened—not that you could find anyone to do that nowadays. They just looked at you and suggested you buy one of those hover jobs with an orange plastic widget instead of a blade. . . .

Babs was Nora. He didn't have to wear a johnny because she knew he didn't go anywhere else and she was way past getting pregnant. She only came out of retirement once a year, for his sake. Just got a bit fond of you, Jacko, that's all. Made a joke one time about her bus pass and that was how he'd known she was older than he, older than Pam, too. Once, when they were still getting through a whole bottle in the course of the afternoon, she'd offered to take her top teeth out to suck him, and he'd laughed but thought it disgusting. Babs was Nora and Nora was dead.

The fellows at the dinner hadn't noticed any difference. He'd kept his discipline. Hadn't got rat-faced. "Can't manage it so well anymore, to tell the truth, old boy," he had said, and someone had sniggered as if there were a joke in it. He'd bailed out early and had a drink at the Marquis of Granby. "No, just the half tonight. Can't manage it so well anymore, to tell the truth." "Never say die," the barman had replied.

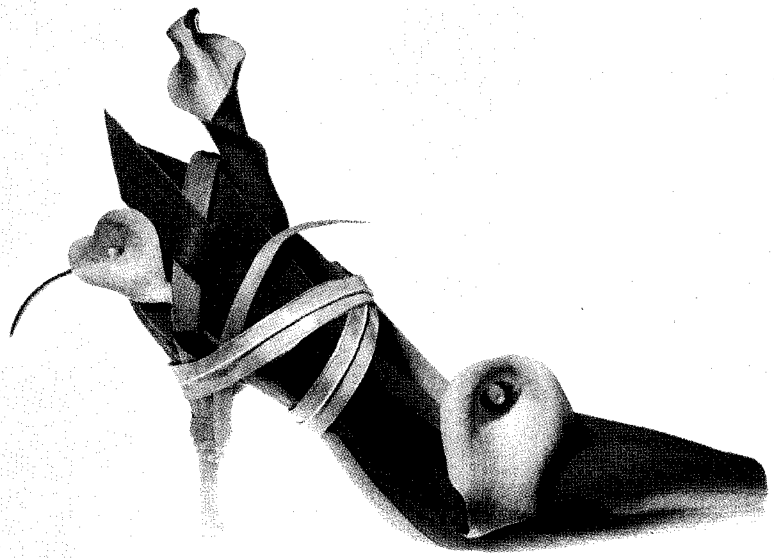
He despised himself for the way he'd pretended with the tart. Do you still want what you've come for? Oh yes, he still wanted what he'd come for, but that wasn't anything that she could possibly know about. He and Babs hadn't done it for, what, five, six years? The last year or two they'd barely even sipped the champagne. He liked her to put on that mumsy nightie he was always teasing her about, climb into bed with him, turn out the light, and talk about the old days. How it used to be. Once to say Hullo, once the real business, once more for the road. "You were a tiger in those days, Jacko. Quite wore me out. Used to take the next day off." "You didn't." "Oh yes, I did." "Well, I never." "Oh yes, Jacko, a real tiger."

She hadn't liked putting up her price, but rents were rents, and it was the space and the time he was paying for, no matter what he wanted or didn't want to do. That was one thing about getting his senior citizen's rail card—he could save on the fare now. Not that there was a now anymore. He'd seen the last of London. You could get Stilton and salad spinners in Shrewsbury, for God's sake. The regimental dinner would increasingly consist of seeing who wasn't there rather than who was. As for his teeth, the local vet could fix them.

His packages were in the rack above him. His tasks list was a set of ticks. Pam would be on her way to the station by now, perhaps turning into the car park. Always went nose first into a parking slot, did Pamela. Didn't like backing, preferred to save that for later, or, more likely, leave it for him to do. He was different. Preferred to back into the slot. That way you were ready for a quick departure. Just a matter of training, he supposed; keeping on the qui vive. Pamela used to say, "When did we last need to make a quick departure? Anyway, there's always a queue to get out." He used to say, "If we got out first there wouldn't be a queue." Queue E.D. And so on.

He promised himself that he wouldn't look at the wheel rims to see if she'd ground them down some more. He wouldn't pass any remarks as he wound down the window and reached across to the token thingy. He wouldn't say, "Look how far the wheels are away and I can still reach." He'd just ask, "How are the dogs? Heard from the kids? Did they deliver the Super-dug?"

He was pleased that he had done his tasks. As the train approached the station, he looked out of the sealed window, hoping to see his wife waiting on the platform. ♦



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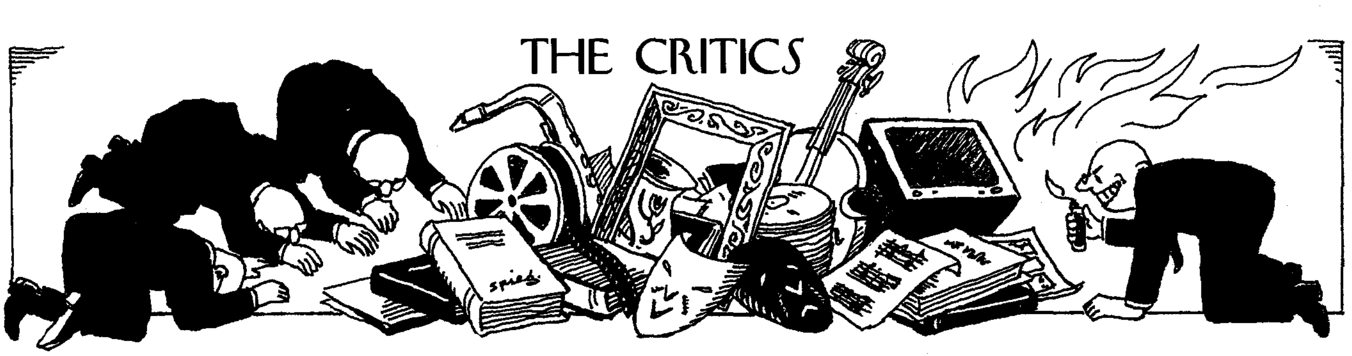


ISTVAN BANYAI

BOOKS

PLEASANTVILLE

Can Disney reinvent the burbs?

BY KURT ANDERSEN

At the end of his life, Walt Disney decided he wanted to create a perfect late-twentieth-century town from scratch in the middle of Florida—a real town with real citizens which he called, in mid-sixties Strangelovian fashion, the Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow, or EPCOT. After Disney died, in 1966, his company, in its tapped-out post-visionary slough, did build something called EPCOT, as part of Disney World, but when it finally appeared, in the early eighties, it turned out to be nothing like Walt's utopian dream. It's not experimental, not a prototype, not a community. Rather, it's just another theme park, an unending world's fair even thicker with product placement and more depressingly ersatz than the Magic Kingdom. EPCOT is the apotheosis of middle-period Bad Disney.

Not long after EPCOT opened, new management took over the company, and revived Disney's old sense of giddy expansiveness. The new Smart Disney commissioned famous architects to build interesting buildings, produced animated features that were as good as the ones the studio used to make, acquired the film company Miramax, and helped redevelop Times Square.

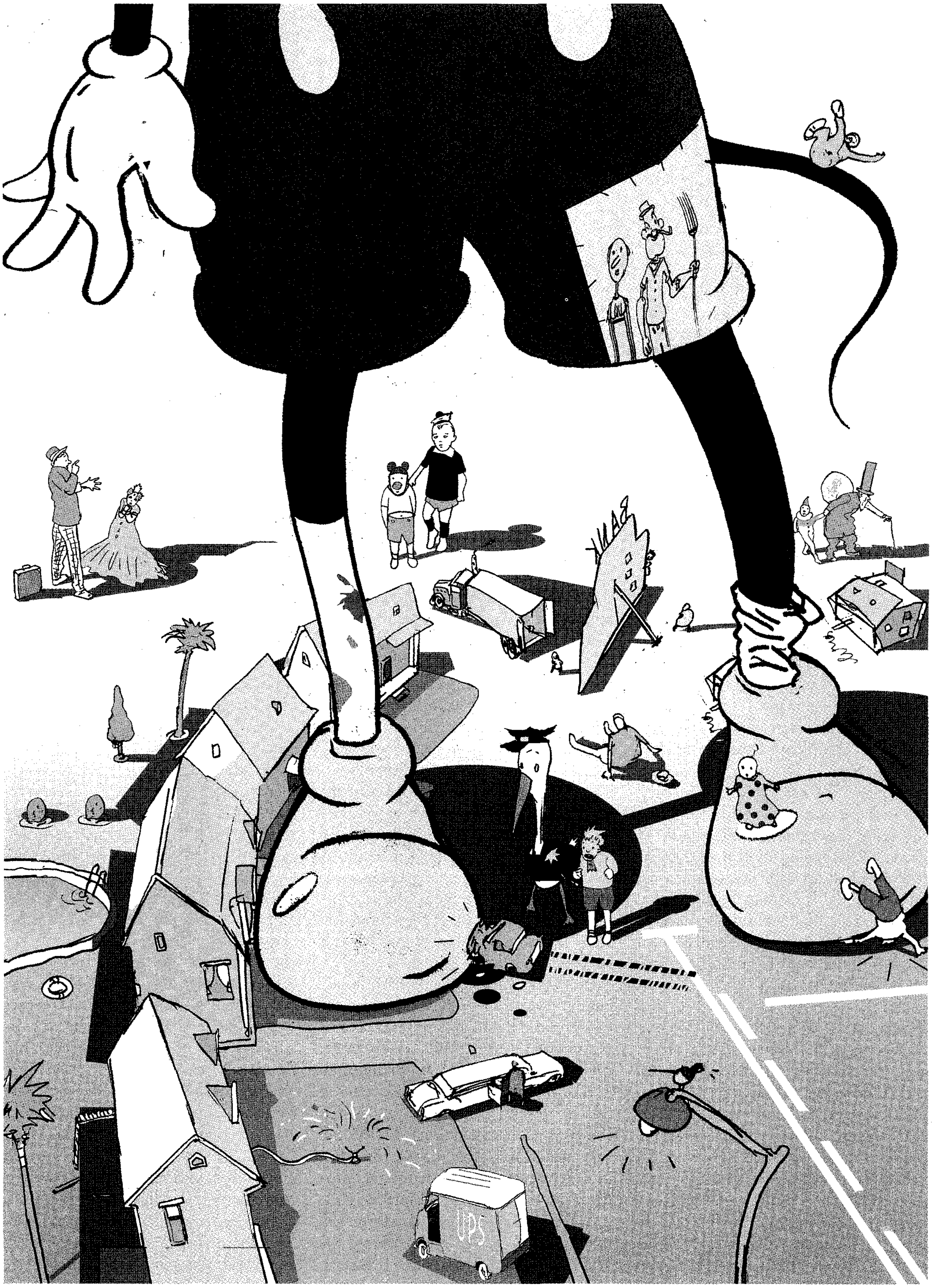
Smart Disney has also created Celebration, a three-year-old town near Disney World that has been in development for nearly fourteen years. Celebration is the real EPCOT—the quasi-democratic, postmodern fulfillment of Walt's totalitarian, late-modern vision. Instead of monorails and a transparent dome, Celebration is being built according to the folk wisdom of American towns from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. Instead of an acronym, the new town has a real name, absurdly upbeat and hyper-American. ("Celebration" is different from New Hope, Pennsylvania, or Magic City, Texas, or Niceville, Florida, only in the sense that those older place-names weren't trademarked.)

According to high-end conventional wisdom, still committed to the idea of Bad Disney, nearly *anything* that the company concocts is inherently suspect—sure to be just another shiny, treacly, relentlessly mass-marketed piece of dreck, part of a commercial culture that is already so Disneyfied that it makes you feel short of breath. So when, on top of its movies and theme parks and home videos and toys and sitcoms and books and magazines and TV news programs and Web sites and cruise ships, the company dares to fabricate a whole new town, the thinking person's unthinking instinct has been to fear and loathe.

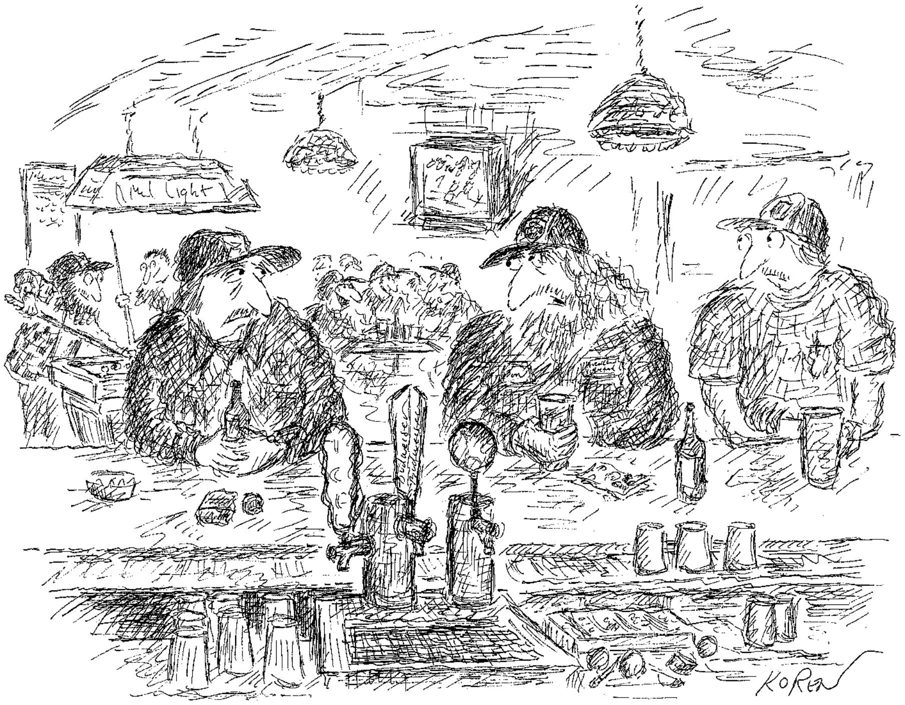
And yet Celebration (pop. 2,500) is vastly superior, aesthetically and probably spiritually, to ninety-nine per cent of the new housing developments in America. It has an architecturally ambitious town center, which Disney built long before there were enough residents to justify the shops. The old-fashioned-looking clapboard houses, available in a sensibly limited number of pattern-book styles and colors, have simple, classic exteriors; most have porches. Even the largest lots are less than a third of an acre, so houses are close together and a tendency to neighborliness is built in.

These are the basics of the New Urbanism, an influential architectural and town-planning movement of the past decade, which looks to the vernacular forms of old American towns as a guide for contemporary development. Of course, a place like Savannah (one of the models for Celebration and other New Urbanist places even before John Berendt's "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil" made it an icon) wasn't designed to be charming and funky; it just ended up that way. A pair of new books with an identical premise—baby-boomer New York authors move to Celebration for a year in order to write about it—bear the same relation to "Midnight in the Garden" that Celebration itself does to Savannah: whereas Berendt stumbled onto his rich Savannah characters and stories, and took most of a decade to write his book about them, both "The Celebration Chronicles" (Ballantine; $25.95), by the New York University professor Andrew Ross, and "Celebration, U.S.A." (Holt; $25), by the *Times* reporter Douglas Frantz and his wife, Catherine Collins, have a deadline-driven determination to simulate the languid, accidental beauty of the real thing.

Both books take the struggle over the Celebration School as their narrative focus, since their authors were all living in the town during the 1997-98 school year, when a founding group of hippie-progressive teachers and administrators were besieged by an uprising of dissatisfied parents. Both books read like oversized news-magazine stories, larded with historical and sociological clichés; sometimes the perceptions and the language are almost indistinguishably trite. "Route 192," Ross writes of



Celebration is the real EPCOT*: the quasi-democratic, postmodern fulfillment of Walt Disney's totalitarian, late-modern vision.*



"Are you just pissing and moaning, or can you verify what you're saying with data?"

• •

the highway just outside Celebration, "plays host to every species of franchise eatery, T-shirt shack, and factory discount outlet known to the modern consumer." Frantz and Collins write of the same strip, "The bad-tempered congestion on the four-lane road passes multiple outlets of every fast-food chain known to mankind [and] countless T-shirt shops." (The authors, it seems, hardly met during the year that both spent there doing the same things in the same little town in the middle of Florida. According to Ross, when he tried to hook up with Frantz and Collins, they told him that their editor at Henry Holt had forbidden them to fraternize with their rival. And, unless I missed it, they don't mention him at all in "Celebration, U.S.A.")

INSTALLING Andrew Ross in Celebration was the more arresting of the authorial concepts, given his personal and professional profile. He is an unmarried, dark, dashing, irreverent Scottish hipster who runs the American Studies Program at N.Y.U. He has published strenuously cutting-edge books such as "No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture" and "Real Love: In Pursuit of Cultural Justice." He wears earrings. Surely Ross's publisher—and maybe even Ross himself—expected a cosmopolite's entertaining, sharply observed fish-out-of-water story. Immediately upon arriving in Florida, he buys a 1985 Cadillac Coupe de Ville, which seems like a sign of ironic high spirits to come—when in Middle America he will do as the Middle Americans do, but with a big, knowing wink. After one page of fun at the expense of some faux-sophisticated interior decorators, however, the culture clash disappears. Ross plunges into the whole-wheat Wonder Bread communitarianism of the place—befriending retired military men, ministering to (and smoking cigarettes with) alienated local teen-agers, and becoming a volunteer fixture at the school. Instead of "The Truman Show," we get "Dangerous Minds."

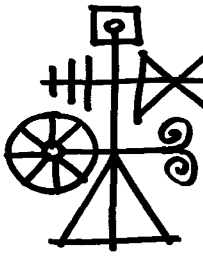
Ross is a likable and an intermittently entertaining observer of the social ecology. Among the many homosexual employees of Disney World, he discovers, the butch gays tend to be stationed in Tomorrowland and the swishier ones at Space Mountain. He plausibly asserts (but unfortunately doesn't depict) the existence of a sort of Hawthorne effect in Celebration: in an experimental prototype community of tomorrow, children feel undue pressure to perform well in school, and adults "had perfected the art of soundbiting" for visiting reporters.

For someone who spent a whole year living in Celebration, and conducted "six or seven hundred hours of interviews," Ross has produced a book surprisingly devoid of vivid scenes. He quotes people, sometimes acutely ("What we need are a few drunks around this town," one man remarks), but the lines are almost all free-floating, cited in isolation to illustrate some point. He mentions a mixer for Celebration's gay residents, for instance, but then, astonishingly, barely describes it. His architectural history is muddled, both in the details and in the big picture. He refers to the conical section of Robert A. M. Stern's building for the Disney animation department in Burbank as a giant "Mad Hatter's hat"; the model, of course, was Mickey Mouse's cap from "Fantasia." "If the postmodernists set out to return the profession of design to a more democratic plane," Ross writes, "the doors they intended to open were not exactly rushed by the masses. Their populist aims were largely thwarted by the 1970s recession." In fact, the rise of postmodern architecture came during the ten years after the 1973-75 recession, and iterations of the style dominated architecture—from downtown skyscrapers to suburban shopping malls—for much of the last two decades.

According to Frantz and Collins, who bought a house in Celebration (Ross, the bohemian, rented an apartment), a majority of the families there had school-age children, and the promise of an excellent education had been a major draw. What most of those parents evidently didn't realize before they arrived was that the school that Disney and its Harvard and Johns Hopkins consultants invented was "alternative" in the extreme. There were no course grades and virtually no books. Ten-year-olds shared classrooms with five-year-olds. Each child was essentially responsible for his or her own curriculum. Students and teachers were called "learners" and "learning leaders," a classroom was a "nurturing neighborhood," and a student assembly a "grand kiva." In lieu of grades, children received gloppy P.C. assessments—"knows the rewards of giving one's energies for a larger good" and "respects human diversity as part of our multicultural society and world." Frantz and Collins's twelve-year-old son even felt obliged to slow down his reading to the level of his classmates.

As the year proceeded, the pedagogical conservatives finally could not contain their unhappiness; they organized grievance committees and threatened to withdraw their children from Celebration School. A sense of crisis settled in, like the late sixties in reverse. Although Ross approves of the town and the New Urbanist idea in general, it was the school in which he invested his most passionate utopian hopes. As an academic avant-gardist from Greenwich Village, he was a defender of the touchy-feely Disney progressives to the end. The popular uprising against them amounted in his view to an ignorant reactionary spasm.

Unlike Ross, Frantz and Collins were sympathetic to the conservative backlash. They see the year of fights over the school, and over the shoddy construction of many of the houses, as a hopeful process of grassroots democracy in action. The angry meetings of parents were proof that Celebration was evolving from a cozy, corporate nanny state peopled by starry-eyed, infantilized Disney true believers into a real community of engaged citizens, which defines its own ideals and copes with its own problems. When popular will finally triumphed over top-down corporate tyranny, however, the result was a conservative remaking of the school. Last fall, according to Ross, "an air of mute discipline prevailed." In Celebration, progress occurred, but the "progressives" lost.



Frantz and Collins's assessment of the town's democratic dialectic seems correct, but their clunky yuppie earnestness can make your teeth hurt. "Like many in our generation," they write, "we were always on the lookout for the next great place to live." And while the official philosophical "cornerstones" of Celebration "were developed as marketing devices . . . that does not make the ideas any less valid as a blueprint for a civil society akin to the imagined prescriptions of Thomas More."

One would probably rather hang out with Andrew Ross, but Frantz and Collins, both professional journalists, have produced the more useful book. They sketch the backgrounds of residents in illuminating detail, and report lucidly on the nuts and bolts of the place—giving a rundown of Celebration's wife-beaters, for instance, and explaining how county and state officials allowed Disney, for just three hundred thousand dollars, to buy its way out of a statutory obligation to build subsidized housing. Frantz and Collins are also bracingly candid, always naming names. They describe their falling out with a new neighbor who suggested that their daughter "deserves to be smacked," and their fallings out with old friends who visit Celebration but fail to love it. They diss Frantz's *Times* colleague Maureen Dowd as an élitist for dissing the town as "just too creepy."

AMERICA started as a string of commercial enterprises (from Columbus to the Dutch in New Netherland) and utopian ventures (from Plymouth Bay to Philadelphia) with variously strict behavioral and aesthetic codes (Puritanism, Quakerism), and it has ever since produced lots of simultaneously creepy and admirable ideological enclaves (the Shakers, Brook Farm, Oneida, New Harmony, Reston) that combine elements of both. Celebration is just the latest bloom of a venerable hybrid strain, both odd and familiar: a free-market experiment in enforced niceness, a radical modern reproduction of conservative styles—and, moreover, a case study in the ongoing American contradictions between community and freedom. How much order and consistency are necessary for civility, and when do they become cultish and stifling? Both Disney and the Celebration pioneers, it's clear, have been confused about all these questions as they've created their new town.

Private corporate entities, which prize efficiency and predictability above all, tend to be a little fascistic. Disney's success in entertainment—especially the theme parks—has been derived from a relentless and unapologetically micromanaged pursuit of its cheerful vision. Before it created Disney World, the company set up an autonomous governmental jurisdiction, Reedy Creek Improvement District, so that it could escape the exasperating inefficiencies of local democracy. But as Disney began

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developing Celebration, in the mid-eighties, it decided to loosen its grip. Osceola County was granted authority over land-use questions. In the summer of 1997, a year after the first residents settled in, the company removed itself from above the title—Disney's Town of Celebration became simply Celebration. Perhaps most significantly, Disney had decided not to build or sell Celebration's houses itself and instead to subcontract that job to companies in Texas and Illinois. Yet, when porches were misplaced and cabinetry cracked and roofs leaked, it was Disney that the residents of the town blamed, because Disney's had been the glorious brand reputation that had persuaded them to pay a large premium to live there.

"Those who seemed to be most disappointed that everything was not perfect," Frantz and Collins write, "were the ones who had believed most strongly in Disney." When the half-baked progressive school failed to deliver a first-class education, Ross writes, "many parents expected brisk consumer satisfaction." But Celebration School is a public institution: for better or worse, Disney doesn't run it. As for the shoddy construction, the Disney company got the blame, yet, as the result of management decisions made years earlier, it had no legal obligation or real authority to fix the problems. And, regarding the school, there was wild disagreement about what the fixes should be.

The great question posed by Celebration—one for which neither Disney nor the residents had an easy answer—was how "real" the town should be. The company considered but then decided against creating a make-believe inspirational local history—one back story would have pretended that survivors of a Spanish shipwreck founded Celebration, and another had it that the town was built on the rubble of Sherman's March. Disney managers originally installed loudspeakers in the streets through which Christmas carols and Disney songs were played, but Michael Eisner, Disney's chairman and C.E.O., and Robert Stern, who was one of the town's master planners and a Disney board member, ordered the canned music stopped after Collins and other residents objected to it. Even so, during the most recent Christmas season in Celebration, according to Andrew Ross, a crowd

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BRIEFLY NOTED

PERLMAN'S ORDEAL, by Brooks Hansen (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $24). Set in London in 1906, not long after Nietzsche pronounced God dead, this ambitious novel is dedicated to the "triumph of unlikelihood"—in other words, to the triumph of the fabulous during an age of reason. Dr. August Perlman, a music lover and a relentless—even uptight—rationalist, treats his patients with suggestive hypnosis. But when he encounters a hysterical thirteen-year-old named Sylvie his methods fail him, and he reluctantly enlists the aid of Mme. Helena Barrett, an alluring theosophist. Hansen is a lucid stylist and an apt storyteller; his chronicle of Perlman's plunge into the deepest irrationality—involving Atlantis, ghosts, and an overdose of hashish—quietly suggests that the unlikely stories are the most affecting.

THE FAITHFUL RIVER, by Stefan Zeromski; translated from the Polish by Bill Johnston (Northwestern; $16.95). The story line of this 1912 novel is simple: a Polish insurgent, wounded in the 1863 January Uprising against Russia, is hidden by a girl; as he recovers they fall in love. Their dramatic story is in itself enough to make the book a lasting pleasure. But Zeromski is also writing about a nation that hadn't actually existed since the previous century, and it is the complexity of his vision—of a Polish spirit without a Poland—that makes the novel a classic of European literature.

ITALIAN FEVER, by Valerie Martin (Knopf; $22). When Lucy Stark's employer falls inelegantly down a well in Tuscany, Lucy must travel there to see that he's given a decent burial. Not surprisingly, within a day she has contracted the kind of gruesome fever that makes you revel in your own health, and she has encountered the kind of Italian lover that makes you book the next flight over. What lingers in the mind, though, is the novel's final touching twist, which slyly dismantles its own satire and casts a long and mysterious shadow over everything that has come before.

THE BLOOD OF STRANGERS, by Frank Huyler (California; $19.95). The author of these doctor stories is an E.R. physician as well as a poet, and his work shows the economy and sharp attention that both jobs demand. Vital moments of intimacy stand out against a backdrop of lowered expectations. In one quick story, the narrator saves a man whose lung is leaking air into his chest cavity: "I simply stuck the needle straight into his chest. Air hissed out of him like a bicycle tire." In another, he watches as a father kisses the forehead of his son's dead friend: "It suddenly seemed very important that I look closely, as closely as I could."

T. S. ELIOT: AN IMPERFECT LIFE, by Lyndall Gordon (Norton; $35). "It is difficult to distinguish what was innovative and original in Eliot's vision of the world from what was idiosyncratic and sometimes sick," Gordon writes, but her biography is a nuanced, discerning account of a life famously flawed in its search for perfection. Born in St. Louis to an old New England family, the shy, ambitious Eliot emigrated to England at twenty-six, in what proved to be the defining decision of his poetic career. Gordon provides insightful interpretations of the poems' religious abstractions, and is best when showing how Eliot's desire for spiritual transcendence—which culminated in his conversion to the Church of England—gave shape to his troubled domestic relationships.

AGAINST THE TIDE, by Richard Adams Carey (Houghton Mifflin; $23). There is no more badly managed resource than the North Atlantic fisheries, whose stocks have dwindled from unbelievable profusion to tragic scarcity. Carey likens the collapse of the fisheries to "an awful settling of a great ship into the abyss, one porthole at a time." The author has sailed and fished with the draggers and long-liners and lobstermen of Cape Cod, and in this deeply observant and well-written book he portrays the complexity of their work while delineating the web of tortuous economic and environmental regulations in which they're enmeshed.

BILL TRAYLOR: 1854-1949, edited by Josef Helfenstein and Roman Kurzmeyer (Yale; $29.95). Traylor, a posthumous star of the American folk-art movement, was born on a slave plantation and took up drawing in 1935, at the age of eighty-two, when he was a homeless indigent in Montgomery, Alabama. With colored pencils, poster paint, and scrap cardboard, he created a vibrant world of working, drinking, and dancing figures, birds in flight, and vicious animals, whose pictographic simplicity and depth of color recall both Matisse and the late paintings of Rufino Tamayo. Here—alongside complementary essays and photographs—are sixty-three of these wonderful works, as well as photos of Traylor taken by Charles Shannon, the local artist who provided him with materials, arranged his first exhibit, and, thankfully, preserved the bulk of his surviving pieces.

ROAD ATLAS, by Campbell McGrath (Ecco; $23). McGrath's fourth and most personal collection of poetry and prose continues to explore the ideas of home and away which pervade his earlier work. Whether a tourist abroad with his family or a peripatetic reader alone in his study, McGrath stalks the "holy junk from the sacred trove," the stuff found in literature and consumer culture which helps us to understand our pieties. In capacious Whitmanesque fashion, McGrath's poems are as fluent about fatherhood as they are about travel, and in their syntactic innovation and rhetorical ambition they challenge the niceties of more conventional free verse.

gathered downtown each night to watch fake Disney snow fall. During the town's Founders' Day ceremony last November, according to Frantz and Collins, Disney officials stupidly and scarily had the local Presbyterian minister remove one sentence from the invocation he delivered: "We pray," the Reverend Patrick Wrisley had wanted to say, "we are not remembered as being a town living in Disney's Tomorrowland nor a town that's all façade and no depth." On the other hand, when one reads about a dispute between Celebration's Presbyterians (who wanted to build an eleven-million-dollar multipurpose religious compound of four modern buildings) and the Disney town planners (who had in mind a nice little old-fashioned church, of white clapboard, and with a steeple and pews for two hundred), the picturesque fakery seems preferable, even if the clapboards in Celebration are of fibre-reinforced concrete.

After all, isn't the obligatory American lawn a form of fakery? Isn't air-conditioning a fake? Aren't the crazy architectural mongrels built every day in every city in America—all the tarty Mediterranean-Colonial-Norman-Palladian raised ranches—thoroughly (and wretchedly) fake? And don't tens of thousands of suburban homeowner associations enforce conformity to much stricter stylistic rules than Celebration's? When intellectuals disparage New Urbanist developments like Celebration as "fake," what really seems to bother them is that talented, energetic members of their taste and educational caste are no longer abstaining from taking their part in the great postwar American architectural project, the building of suburbs, and have instead created a movement to reform suburbs, to make them more like old American towns where people walk and mingle. Celebration's "fakery"—its small scale, its density, its hidden garages, its pre-mall commercial core—is in the service of a coherent vision, as opposed to the accumulation of developers' cost-efficient shortcuts and aesthetic bad habits that produce the random, sprawling, ghastly "real" suburbs of the late twentieth century.

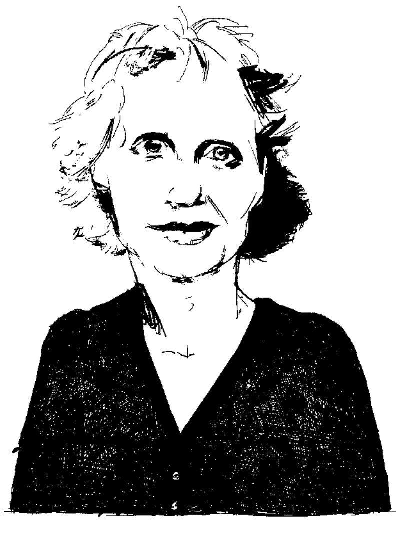
The architect and planner Andrés Duany, who, with his wife, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, is responsible for many of the New Urbanist developments under construction across the country, believes that Celebration will prove to be a more important prototype than Seaside, the pretty Florida resort town that he and Plater-Zyberk designed almost two decades ago. "Celebration is so damn visible," Duany said when I called to ask him about references to him and to Seaside which appear in the two new books. "I see its effect on developers. It's affecting the vernacular." In the same way that "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" helped make feminists out of millions of girls and women who don't call themselves feminists, Disney's new town may incline people who would never call themselves New Urbanists to build and buy houses and settle in neighborhoods that resemble Celebration's. It's possible that Disney's town, a century from now, will have earned its preposterous name. ♦

UNNATURAL LOSS

A primer on mourning, French style.

BY DAPHNE MERKIN

Most of us go through our days with the awareness that life is a fiercely random affair pushed safely to the back of our minds. The fact that much of who we are is a matter of luck, with an occasional assist from our best efforts, is something we know abstractly, without contemplating it from the moment we get up and brush our teeth. To live otherwise would be too difficult, would make each of us into a Kafka, overwhelmed by the risks inherent in every decision: we would never bestir ourselves to marry or procreate or drive on highways or fly on impulse to Las Vegas. Indeed, there is a sense in which it can be viewed as a failure of imagination to go forward at all.



Geneviève Jurgensen

RICCARDO VECCHIO

Geneviève Jurgensen's "The Disappearance" (Norton; $22) is a recollection, told in as much tranquillity as can be mustered, that details the intrusion of the horrific into a clean, well-lit, and very orderly Parisian existence. The author, whose two young children were killed in a car accident, captures the feeling of helpless, almost resolute submission that she experienced in the face of getting news of the disaster: "I immediately felt how impossible it was to raise myself to the scale of the event. The terror mounted in me out of all proportion to my own dimensions. . . . I was still this little woman in her little apartment, next to a little man in the same little apartment. The terror targeted us exclusively, we were its only prey, its only destination, the terminus." Jurgensen's daughters, Mathilde and Elise, who were seven and four, respectively, were thrown from the back seat of a Renault 5, driven by their Aunt Aline, when it was hit by another car on the Autoroute du Nord, on April 30, 1980. The two girls literally vanished; their ejection from the right side window was so soundless and so swift that their aunt and uncle, both of whom were unhurt, initially thought that the sisters were still in the car. (We learn in passing that they were not wearing seat belts.) The driver of the other car, a young man, was speeding, and got off with paying a fine of seventeen hundred francs. There was also an infant in the car carrying Mathilde and Elise—their cousin, who survived unscathed in her baby seat.

More than a decade later, Jurgensen records her memories of the event, and her responses to it, in a series of conversational letters sent to a friend over a period of almost two years. We learn that the weekend before the accident the girls, eerily, buried two dolls in the garden of the family's country house, in Compiègne, which was next to the cemetery where they were soon to be buried. We also learn that the day before the accident they'd had their class photographs taken, the older girl dressed in a navy-blue uniform and the younger, still in nursery school, wearing a dress with a sailor collar. This is the sort of ungarlanded information that Jurgensen is compelled to set down: how the children looked ("One was more blond and slender, the other more athletic and with darker hair and skin"); where they went to swim in the summer (the same beach to which Jurgensen's parents had taken her and her sister when they were children); how many times they went to see "The Jungle Book" (four). Although their mother worries that "their common death has made them into Siamese twins," that "one of them always masks the other," we begin to form images of them, and even to tell them apart—Mathilde, the elder, is watchful and protective, while Elise, the one who insists on returning to "The Jungle Book," sounds more determined and instinctive. The prose, translated from the French by Adriana Hunter, is stark and concise, with touches of brooding or longing. "Yes, my Elise has been forgotten. I think about her. I call her my 'Lilou' as I used to. I put her vest on and run after her to put on her pyjamas which she does not want on. She laughs, I catch her, she is a sturdy little thing, I win, and there she is dressed. No one remembers her." In such passages, the writing duplicates the push and pull that accompanies the process of mourning—attempting to frame the loss while at the same time recapitulating the experience of the mind descending into private, inarticulate sorrow.

"The Disappearance" is about the unimaginable, and about the way it is rendered survivable, which is not the same as bearable. Within several years of the accident, Jurgensen, who was working as a speech therapist, and her husband, an architect, had two more children—another girl, "smaller than the first two," and a boy. "The children have asked us a hundred times whether they would have been born if their sisters had not died. I really hope so, but I just cannot say." She is straightforward about her need to go on, partly to fill the emptiness but also because that is what people do, except when they are struck by those Beckett-like moments in which they can't: "When I was near that Renault 5 the other day, I wanted to lie down on the rear seat and wait for the end of time."

Jurgensen is not someone who indulges in regret or nostalgia—"It is against my nature to go backwards," she observes—but circumstances have made an elegist of her, have condemned her to the most painful layering of memories. In March of 1993, she writes of being assailed by an image from a spring day in 1980, a few weeks after the death of her children: "I was held up in the traffic at the wheel of the 304 in which, a few weeks earlier, the girls had sat behind me. I talked to them and kept an eye on them, smiling at them in the rear-view mirror. There was no one in the rear-view anymore. I was driving an empty car."

What separates Jurgensen's approach to catastrophe from other contemporary accounts is the premium she places on ordinary functioning: she has a need to make something shapely of her life, in spite of the bruises that fate has covered her with. We have become so fascinated by the charms of dysfunctionalism and the consoling group-think of twelve-step programs that her slim book actually reads like an exotic adventure story—a new kind of Robinson Crusoe tale, set in upper-middle-class Paris, where the heroine stays afloat with the help of family and friends but without recourse to a sexy nervous breakdown. One suspects that this would never fly in America: in "Layover," a recent novel by Lisa Zeidner, the heroine, who also loses a small child in a car wreck, assuages herself by shedding her identity and engaging in random adulterous sex. Jurgensen's abjuration of blame feels somewhat foreign as well: she doesn't seem to hold her sister-in-law responsible, in the way that most of us would. Nor, with a striking instinct for self-preservation, does she hold herself accountable, though it was she who placed the girls in the car and neglected to fasten their belts.

Jurgensen lacks the taste for large solutions which is so pervasive in American culture; there is no irradiating moment of self-transformation, no message that would enable the author to go the Oprah route and bring others triumphantly along with her. What she has instead is a gift for friendship, an ability to shrug off the indifference or hapless cruelty of strangers, and the conviction of her own memories. Perhaps her attitude is too implacably French—too tactile and too rigorous both—to serve as a model for American

POSTSCRIPT

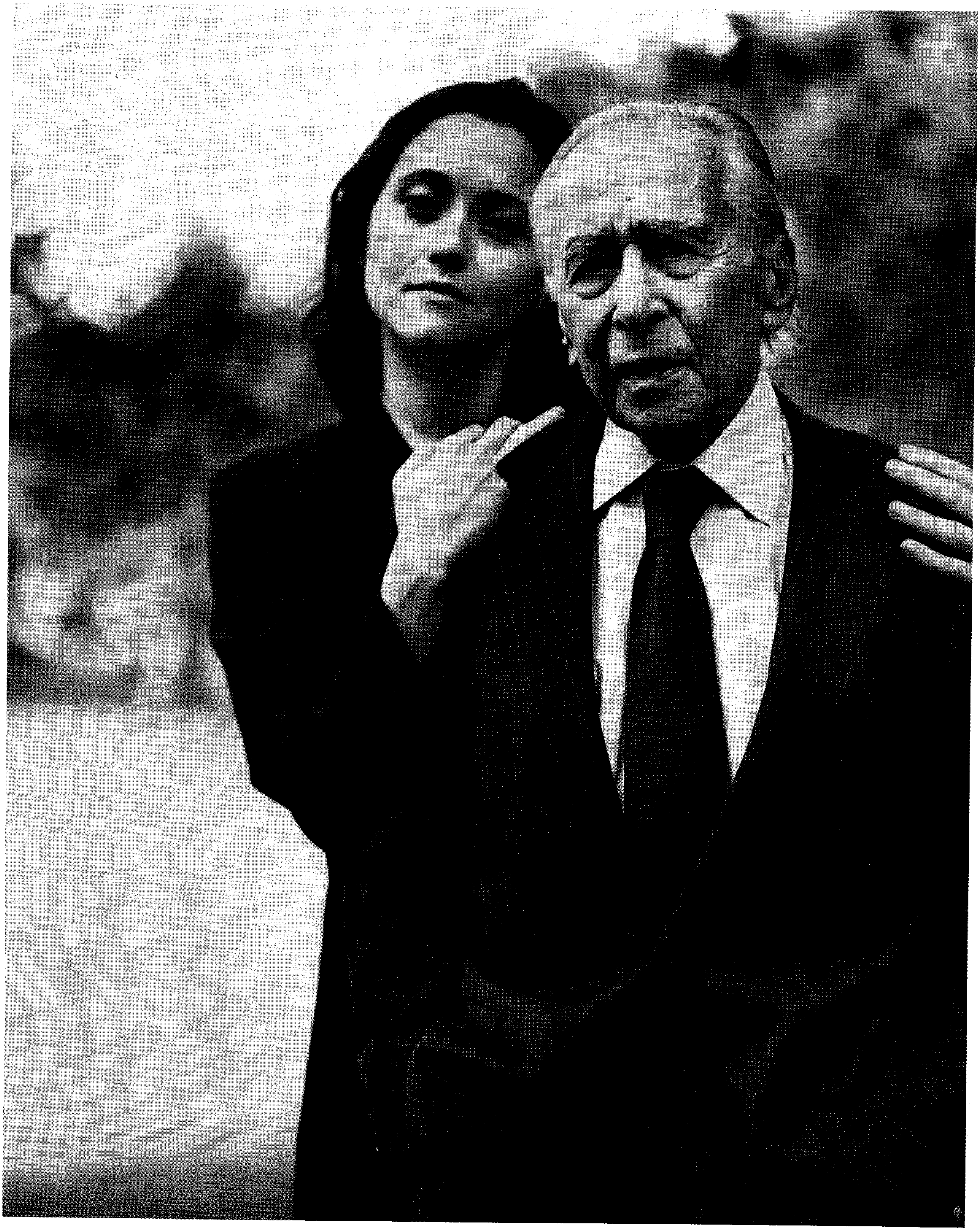
THE LION

One of the endearing things about Leo Castelli, who died a week ago at the age of ninety-one, was that he managed to become the world's most influential art dealer without ever being much good at business. Castelli's matchless stable of artists included several (Rauschenberg, Johns, Warhol, Lichtenstein, Oldenburg) who achieved wealth commensurate with their fame, but his gallery, even in its mature years, was often close to insolvency, and Castelli himself, although he lived with great elegance and style, was not a rich man. Having found his métier relatively late in life—he was nearly fifty when he opened the gallery—Castelli treated his artists with what an early associate, Ivan Karp, once described as "reckless generosity," and what he got back was a level of respect and affection that few art dealers encounter. William Rubin, the Museum of Modern Art's former director of painting and sculpture, once said, "I know of nobody who is less oriented toward the purely financial aspects of art dealing."

Generosity kept him young; that, and his epicure's delight in what he called *les choses de la vie*—food, wine, pretty women, Iris Murdoch's novels, conversations in the five languages he spoke with such precision and wit. "What's deep in Leo," according to Ileana Sonnabend, his first wife and lifelong best friend, "is his absorption of different European cultures." But Castelli, who was born in Trieste, had also absorbed American culture, during the postwar era when it was percolating with new energies, and his social agility on both sides of the Atlantic became a catalyst in the rise of American art.

Even when the Castelli Gallery lost momentum in recent years, and artists began defecting, Leo turned a deaf ear to age and atrophy. Approaching ninety, he got married again, to the young Italian art historian Barbara Bertozzi, and together they moved the gallery from SoHo back to the Upper East Side. Leo still came in several times a week, but the night before he died, in bed in his New York apartment, he told Barbara that he was ready "to go to paradise."

—Calvin Tomkins

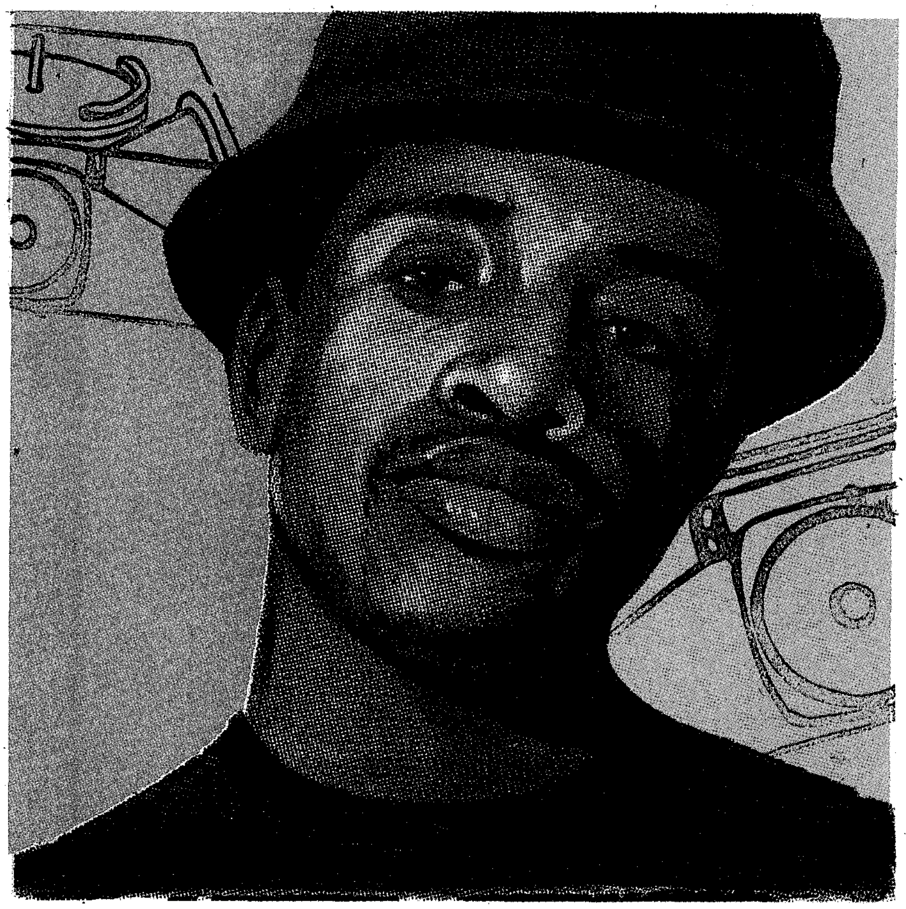


Leo Castelli and Barbara Bertozzi in Central Park, July 7, 1997. Photograph by Max Vadukul.

readers. She has a controlled, almost Cartesian approach to grief, in which an obsession with numbers—noting how many weeks after the accident she gave birth (fifty-one) or the amount of money (a hundred lire) she put into a church meter—helps her filter her experience.

In the end, there is something intensely modest about "The Disappearance" and about the expectations of the person who wrote it. Jurgensen has suffered a great deal without becoming calcified, or pious, in part because she has an enormous capacity for diverting herself with small pleasures. She is keenly attuned to the aesthetic side of life, whether in the form of a large white chrysanthemum that is sent annually to the girls' grave site by Mathilde's godfather or in the form of a dog—an elegant gray pointer—that she and her husband acquired in the year following their daughters' death. She pays constant attention to the feel and look of things ("cool sheets, the vast expanse of the double mattress"), almost as though her movements were being edited by a director to whom such textures mattered greatly, an Eric Rohmer or a Claude Chabrol. But in her life beauty is not merely set design; it is a vital form of solace.

The external consolations, of course, can take one just so far. Jurgensen does the hard work of mourning the only way it can be done, from the inside out, the self addressing the self: "Everything was primordial. Some things required enormous effort. But we got the hang of it." She makes us realize that no one will ever see Mathilde and Elise as she knew them; we sense instead the lingering presence of their absence. Yet one comes away from this memoir not only with admiration for Jurgensen's character but with a touch of envy for some of the circumstances that shaped her. In spite of her loss, she has around her the sort of loving tribe—spouse, children, parents, in-laws, and siblings—that few of us can claim and that our culture hardly believes in anymore. Indeed, her existence sounds so rich in sensation and affection that it takes on a kind of lachrymose seduction; one wants to join in it, to walk with her in the woods around Compiègne, where the flowers—daffodils and wild hyacinth—grow "in a thick carpet of yellow and blue." ♦



"Rappers just parody themselves now," Prince Paul says. "All I do is comment on it."

TAVIS COBURN

POPULAR MUSIC

HOW YOU SOUND?

Prince Paul produces a brave new world of alternative hip-hop.

BY HILTON ALS

NO big deal, but years ago, when I was around twelve, I got into the habit of reading aloud on Sunday afternoons to anyone who would listen: my mother, my older sister, or my younger brother—a captive audience. I'm lying when I say it was not a big deal. It was to me: I didn't just read aloud; I performed. I'd dress up in what I imagined a writer who gave readings might wear: a "good" white cotton shirt and a cravat that I fashioned out of a green silk-and-polyester scarf. I parted my hair, shiny with pomade, in the middle. I lived in a confusion of time periods then, and all of them were yellow with age. Almost without exception, the writers I chose to read aloud were nineteenth-century American Negro poets, my favorite being Paul Laurence Dunbar, whose "A Negro Love Song" I intoned, week after week, in a dialect that the N.A.A.C.P. has worked overtime to get America to forget:

> Seen my lady home las' night,
> Jump back, honey, jump back.
> Hel' huh han' an' sque'z it tight,
> Jump back, honey, jump back.

Dunbar's collection "Lyrics of Lowly Life" evoked the blues idiom that I had yet to discover on records. The only contemporary music I heard much of then—the soundtrack of my life—was made by the West Indian women who sang, without much apparent feeling, about Christ and the everlasting in the Episcopal church that my grandmother, who was from Barbados, sometimes sent her "heathen" grandchildren to. I had no desire to emulate those voices. They were closer to Africa or to Britain than to America: they didn't swing and they sounded, to me, studiously cadenced, as stiff as the singers' middle-class aspirations. What thrilled me about Dunbar's poems was their insistence on a world and a way of being that was so completely different from the West Indian culture I knew, with its constant musty questioning of who had "class" or didn't, who was "wut'less" or wasn't. Black Americans—they were my exotic. I was a minor White Negro, who hadn't yet discovered the sound of real black America at Birdel's record shop, on Nostrand Avenue, in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn.

At Birdel's—my older cousin took me there when I was barely a teen-ager—the man behind the counter would play records for you if you couldn't make up your mind which one to buy. Back then, you could ask for Michael Jackson's "Ben" or the funny bits from Millie Jackson's concept album "Caught Up," on which world-weary Millie said that "the sweetest thing" about being in love with a married man is that "you don't have to wash nobody's funky drawers but your own." Often the man behind the counter at Birdel's would play two or three different records at once. Those two or three different sounds would mix with the dance hits blasting from the loudspeakers outside the shop until it all became one sound that I couldn't take in fast enough. Eventually, I began to realize that that sound had its own underlying aesthetic. It involved a recognition and acceptance of the disorder of life, and particularly of black American life—of the country's fractured minority communities, of that rich set of subcultures that lack consistent government, representation, even thought. Whether jazz, soul, or R. & B., black American music was a multitude of voices in different keys; it was a collection of disparate sounds, drawn together by rhythm, cadence, and style. When Memory serves, that music told me, the courses may arrive out of order and with the wrong silverware.

I WAS reminded of Birdel's not so long ago, when I first heard the CD "Psychoanalysis (What Is It?)," by the thirty-two-year-old solo artist, mixer, producer, and d.j. Prince Paul. I didn't realize until after I'd heard the album that I had already been a fan of Prince Paul's for a number of years. Prince Paul (whose name in the real world is Paul Huston) is the architect of many new sounds, in collaboration with many artists—so many sounds and artists, in fact, that at first it's difficult to determine just where his particularity and his genius lie; one is too busy failing to catch up with what he has just done to deal with his back catalogue. To date, he has remixed fifteen singles by a variety of artists, including the Beastie Boys, George Clinton, and the Fine Young Cannibals. He has produced tracks by eleven solo artists, including rap royalty M.C. Lyte and Big Daddy Kane, rap anomalies 3rd Bass and the Jaz, rock-soul fusion artist Vernon Reid, and comedian Chris Rock, whose Prince Paul-produced album "Bigger & Blacker" includes the single "No Sex," the video of which is currently in heavy rotation on MTV.

Prince Paul has also distinguished himself by incorporating his clients' work into the long-playing disk of his imagination. In fact, it is Prince Paul's skills as a spinmeister that have made him like no other music producer. His deejaying has added texture and bounce and thought to several lacklustre rap groups (Stetsasonic, for one), and he has elevated it to something of an art, an expression of individuality and sensibility—or, at any rate, an activity that has more potential than scratching or playing music solely for people to dance to.

Prince Paul's interest in records stems from his childhood on Long Island. "Everything I can remember as a child was always based around the record-player in the living room," he told me earlier this summer. "My mom's thing was Barry White, Al Green, and Marvin Gaye. And my father was a big jazz fanatic—Thelonious Monk. Music was always the focus. Where my friends were really into toys, I always wanted a record-player or a cassette recorder. That was my zone. Deejaying was just a natural progression." Prince Paul perfected his now wildly imitated deejaying style in the early eighties, when he was still a teen-ager playing house parties in Brooklyn and Long Island. He was among the first d.j.s to use old game-show and sitcom themes, dialogue from movies and talk shows, and so on, as a

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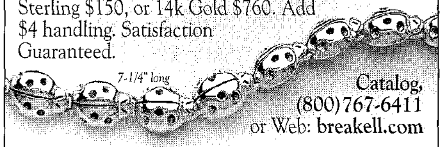

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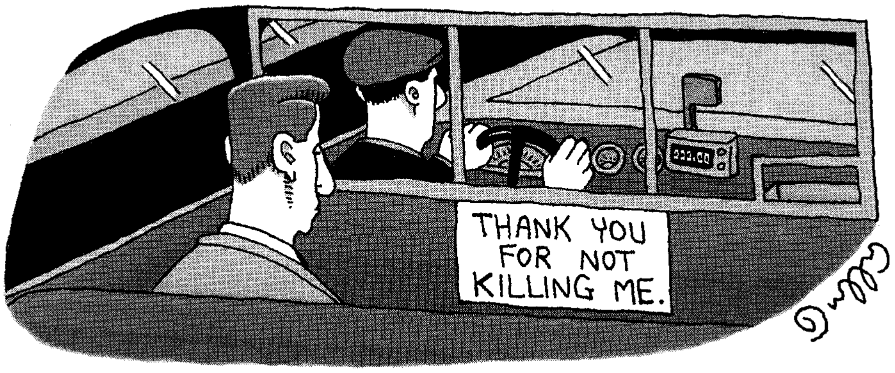
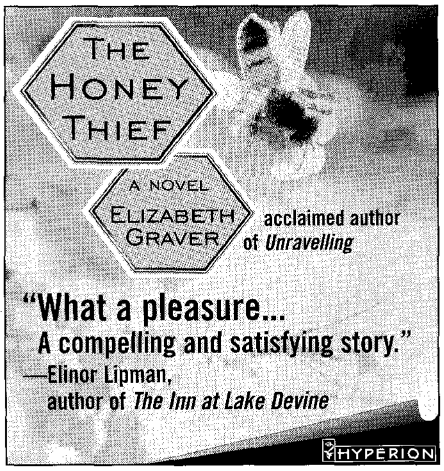

THANK YOU FOR NOT KILLING ME.

corollary to "real" music. He wielded his turntable like an axe, and his grooves were comparable to an exceptional guitarist's licks. (Sampling is, in many ways, a new form of jazz.)

I had first discovered Prince Paul's distinctive sound on three albums by the phenomenally gifted hip-hop group De La Soul: "3 Feet High and Rising" (1989), "De La Soul Is Dead" (1991), and "Buhloone Mindstate" (1993). For me, those three albums—all produced by Prince Paul, it turns out—were emblematic of a certain Negro philosophy, a philosophy that views good manners as a way of staving off bad times, dignity and cool as a way of surviving in an embattled world. A version of that philosophy found expression in the Staple Singers' 1971 hit "Respect Yourself," for instance, where the listener is chastised, "Talkin' about the President won't stop air pollution. Put your hand on your mouth when you cough, that'll help the solution." But the Staple Singers' song and others like it relied on the tenets of gospel music; it had the no-nonsense air of the church about it. Prince Paul's aesthetic was less about the church than about his peers flipping out into some other zone.

When Prince Paul met up with De La Soul, in Amityville, Long Island, in the mid-eighties, the group had already developed the script of its act—the rhymes, the language—but didn't yet have a sound. With Prince Paul's help, they created something entirely new. They weren't "nigguhs" and didn't feel they had to be; their overriding aesthetic was about joking with both the black and the white communities. They didn't dress like any of the other rappers on the scene. They had sculptural hair styles and wore corduroys, Hush Puppies-like shoes, and leather maps of Africa strung around their necks, as opposed to the big gold chains, Kangols, and leather jackets of the period. They had the look of cool black nerds. One De La Soul member renamed himself P.A. Pasemaster Mase. Another was called Posdnuos, and the other Trugoy ("soundsop" and "yogurt" spelled backward). They sang and talked about messing "up my mind with the eye patch," and having "potholes in my lawn," and living in "a daisy age." They created a quirky new theatre of coloredness, the surreal humor of which has yet to be equalled. De La Soul stood out in marked contrast to Dr. Dre and the suffocating and predictable reality of 1993's "The Chronic," which sounds as dated as Walter Lee Younger's speeches about the Man in "A Raisin in the Sun." De La Soul didn't capitalize on Negro suffering—it just wasn't entertaining. Instead, they opened the music world up to Negro humor. They acted out what society made them feel: the strangeness and the estrangement. They became what the great R. & B. singer Betty Davis sang about in "He Was a Big Freak."

IN the video for De La Soul's "Me, Myself, and I," Prince Paul says, "If you take three glasses of water and put food coloring in them, you have many *different colors but it's still the same old* water. Make the connection?" It didn't matter that you couldn't make the connection, at least not right away. It was his thinking, his rationale unencumbered by the need to control things, to label them right or wrong, that was so loopy and delightful. Unlike Tupac Shakur, Prince Paul isn't about trying to blackmail your ass into listening to, let alone accepting, his point of view because you feel embarrassed about not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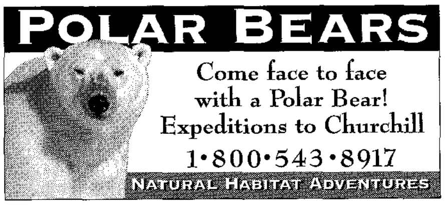
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being down enough or colored enough to listen to someone as hip as he is.

In fact, on his solo albums and in his collaborative productions, Prince Paul prefers to show how the rap community's exaggerated "blackness" is just another measure of running game to get paid. Act niggerish enough on your CD and your concert tour, and you're popular across the board. "Rappers just parody themselves now," Prince Paul told me. "All I do is comment on it. It's funny. I look at a lot of rappers going like, 'Man, I got more guns than you. I'm the bigger ho.' It's like, you got to be kidding. And they call what *I* do crazy! There's so much stuff to write about, man. People just limit themselves."

While Paul no longer works with De La Soul (he told me, somewhat self-deprecatingly, that they had matured, while he's still the guy who'll stick a buzzer in his handshake), the eclectic, sampled structure of their albums lives on—most famously in "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" and in Paul's solo work. His album "Psychoanalysis" was originally recorded in 1996, for a small Brooklyn label called WordSound, but was rereleased on his current label, Tommy Boy. Technically, "Psychoanalysis" and Prince Paul's most recent album, "A Prince Among Thieves," which came out this spring, fall into the category of hip-hop—that peculiar musical hybrid comprised, in part, of new lyrics that are either sung or rapped or both over sound effects and pieces of music sampled from other recordings. "Psychoanalysis" began with a found record on which a psychoanalyst (with a heavy Viennese accent) offers his services, and Paul layered other sounds on top: strange voices freaking out, other voices telling stories of the "subconscious mind," fantastic rhythm tracks. "A Prince Among Thieves," which one critic called "the first hip-hopera" (Paul himself prefers to call it "a movie on wax"), is a partly scripted, partly improvised rap musical. "I wrote it as a screenplay, initially," Prince Paul told me. "Then the artists came through with the lyrics and the rhymes exactly as I wanted them to." "A Prince Among Thieves" tells the story of a boy and his efforts to earn enough money to cut a demo for, of course, the RZA, of Wu-Tang Clan, the paradigm of black male music-world hard-core success. In order to get the demo made, the protagonist has to engage in all sorts of illegal dealings and eventually gets ripped off and shot—a not unfitting metaphor for the music industry as Prince Paul knows it.

But both albums refuse to fall into the common traps of hip-hop machismo. On "Psychoanalysis," a black man talks about his rap fantasies less as a predictable declaration of his toughness than as a condition of his individual madness. It's chilling. And on "A Prince Among Thieves" black male fraternity, as it has been objectified in the low-budget blaxploitation flicks that show "dudes in the 'hood," is given a new twist. Many of the traditional theatrical black stereotypes are deflated: the religious mother, the nagging girlfriend, the sleazy rap impresario, the nefarious underworld.

Where Puff Daddy lazily applies a new voice and lyric to a preëxisting track—as in his regrettable "Come with Me," where he droned on over the Led Zeppelin classic "Kashmir"—Prince Paul sews together a complex patchwork or remixes an old record out of its former groove and into a new one. His real genius lies not in an exploration of genre but in his understanding and re-creation of how you—and you and you—Americans sound. In that regard, his project is not dissimilar from George Herriman's "Krazy Kat"—in which Ignatz Mouse and Krazy Kat combine black, Yiddish, and Navajo syntax, among others—or from Gertrude Stein's monumental "The Making of Americans." But instead of trying to sweep "every kind of person" into the emotional disinterestedness of a text, as Stein did, Prince Paul uses buzzers, snippets of dialogue from old gangster movies, old game-show theme songs, canned applause, the sound of tap shoes tapping, clocks ticking, karate chops from kung-fu movies, French-language instructional tapes, and assorted voices: irate black and Puerto Rican girls complaining in Burger King, or a disgruntled mother telling her son "it's not all about whips and chicken heads—better go out there and start politickin'." It's Birdel's record shop all over again. It's the emotional and comic detritus of America filtered through Prince Paul's distinctive Negro aesthetic.

Paul's next project, he told me,

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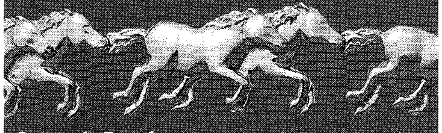

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is another Tommy Boy "production thing" called "Handsome Boy Modeling School," with performers as diverse as Sean Lennon, Mike D., of the Beastie Boys, and Thom Yorke, of Radiohead. He is also working with a new discovery, who goes by the name of M.C. Paul Barman—a white guy who is freakier and therefore riskier than Eminem, the vanilla flavor of the month. From the sound of Barman's first single, "Post Graduate Work," he's also got a love for the complications that can arise from listening to several voices at once and knowing that it's not just how they sound but how they make you listen to yourself, wrapped up in all your colors. ♦

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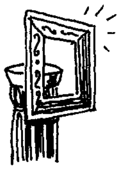
The artist as curator.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL



An exhibition organized by the enigmatic sculptor and installation artist Robert Gober contains nothing that he made. It is a group show at the Matthew Marks Gallery, on West Twenty-second Street (through September 18th), of five not very well known artists: Anni Albers, Robert Beck, Cady Noland, Joan Semmel, and Nancy Shaver. Summer group shows—shallowly breathing signs of life to fill the art business's torpid months—are generally forgotten as soon as viewed, if not faster. This one won't be. Gober's untitled curatorial performance is a lovely act of tribute to colleagues and a feat of self-revelation. At a time when so much contemporary curating is overthought and underfelt, Gober demonstrates the neglected option of an artist's-eye view. The show has haunted me since I first saw it, and it will haunt you, too, if you let it.

Gober is a star of the last decade. That much about him, and little else, is clear. He rose to fame in synch with some baleful early-nineties fashions: identity and gender politics, queer theory, deconstructionist social criticism, and brainy excruciations about "the body." Those preoccupations have faded in recent years, I'm glad to note. Young artists lately seem comfortable with aesthetic pleasure not as a symptom of "commodity fetishism," say, but as an indispensable value. The changing critical climate seems sure to alter Gober's reputation, but perhaps more sideways than downward. He has never scanted pleasure, for one thing. He just laces it with certain toxins.

Gober is known for making wax casts of male legs (usually clad in shoes, socks, and pants) and of whole lower male bodies (usually naked), protruding from walls at floor level. Fool-the-eye flesh bristles with real hair and may creepily sprout into candles or morph, in places, into sinklike drains. Gober is keen on sinks and drains, and on running water, which, in some of his installations, gushes from spigots or gurgles beneath the floor. In one notorious piece, a section of culvert mounted through the middle of a statue of the Virgin Mary reinterprets divine intercession as road plumbing. Gober's symbols of hygiene stir thoughts of its antagonists: dirt, sickness, death. Much of his work seems to be indirectly—even quite delicately—about physical fear and loathing. He exercises considerable tact when he is exploring gloomy obsessions—whether his own or, on this occasion, other people's.

Daylight dimly illuminates the huge front room at Marks through the gallery's glass front. (The room's skylights are shrouded in black.) We hear a rasping, insistent noise. The sound comes from a video monitor that plays a three-and-a-half-minute tape loop by Robert Beck, an eclectic artist who specializes in allusions to desire and dread out in the woods. On the screen, a man (Beck's father, reportedly) toils with a carpenter's saw in a snowy yard as he cuts the antlers out of a deer's severed head. The chore is disagreeable. The man, whose face is not seen, mutters "yuck" a couple of times. The sawing goes on and on. I yearn for the guy to stop, or at least to employ a more efficient tool. But gradually, encouraged by Gober's tacit endorsement, I am disarmed by Beck's grave scrutiny of this repulsive and banal scene. It comes to stand for any effort to master personal nightmares through sheer endurance.

Across the room from Beck's video hangs a fabric work, "Black-White-Gray," which was designed at the Bauhaus, in 1927, by the late Anni Albers, the wife of Josef Albers. It is on loan from the Museum of Modern Art. In general, textiles don't do a lot for me except in passing, as decorations. This textile riveted me. The formal intelligence behind its asymmetrical arrangement of squares and rectangles of black, white, and two grainy grays is phenomenal—way overqualified for what was originally intended as a tablecloth. The weaving could also function as the spread for a child-sized bed—an association made irresistible by Gober's own psychologically fraught riffs on cribs and playpens. As refined a work as the Beck is gross, the Albers isn't a whit less impressive or—because of its selection by Gober—less insinuating.

This show suggests to me a metaphorical family romance, in which Beck's tape evokes a traumatizing dad and Albers's textile an exacting mom. The other works at Marks complete the analogy: Cady Noland as a sister in misery; Joan Semmel as a raffishly louche aunt; and Nancy Shaver as an exemplary older cousin. Noland is an especially welcome presence. I've missed her. She has exhibited rarely in recent years, after a thrilling run in the early nineties with installations of vaguely and not so vaguely carceral items (chain-link fencing, handcuffs) and variously charged Americana references (barbecues, Charles Manson). At Marks, her new sculpture, entitled "Stand-In for a Stand-In," is an elegant totem of savage guilt.

Installed by Gober between the Beck and the Albers, the blockily monumental Noland is an abstracted rendition of penal stocks. Five holes are positioned to imprison ankles, wrists, and neck. The unit is made of a corrugated silver cardboard that suggests soft-finished aluminum when it's viewed from a distance. Why do I find the image's nasty resonance so exhilarating? The reason is art historical. Noland and Gober are heirs of Minimalism, and they both explore the nastiness that is latent in the classic Minimalist sculpture of, for example, Donald Judd, whose boxes amount to drastically dehumanized equivalents of the human body. Noland and Gober tap the hysteria that always seethed beneath the impassivity of what Judd primly termed "specific objects." The effect is both impudent and mightily demystifying.

Joan Semmel, who started her career as an Abstract Expressionist some forty years ago, became an avowed feminist painter in the nineteen-seventies. Her aim is to render the female nude with, in her words, "a female subjectivity that does not accommodate the male gaze." The gaze in her pictures is explicitly hers, as she looks down the foreshortened length of her own body. On the side walls of the front room at Marks, two paintings show Semmel accompanied by a man in attitudes that are possibly pre- and postcoital. In a back room, spotlighted like an evil shrine, another canvas depicts the outstretched bare arm of the artist/viewer washing the leg of a preteen boy who, standing in a bathtub, evinces a budding erection. The vision recalls, as if by an electric arc, another violating arm: the one that is intent on phallic antlers in Beck's video. (Come to think of it, those antlers are unbranched spikes—likewise immature.) Semmel can hardly have anticipated a male gaze like Gober's, which infuses her subjects with all-around identification: as woman, man, and boy at once.

Nancy Shaver is represented by seventeen modest black-and-white photographs picturing toddlers' T-shirts that are imprinted with designs of adult presumption, such as football, Miss America, and the message "I'm a Little Stinker." Unfamiliar to me, this body of work bears a significant date: 1975-77, ahead of the Post-Structuralist wave that the photographs typify. Shaver was, precociously, onto appropriation, presentation (as opposed to representation), and deconstruction (of, say, "socially constructed identity"). It's all there, with both disarming zest and something like innocence.

I never thought that I would feel nostalgic for the onset of the "anti-aesthetic"—as such stuff actually came to be labelled, with critical approbation. But even a dubious idea, when new, possesses a tonic bite. I am convinced that Gober wants me to register precisely this freshness and to deduce that it marks an important stage in his past artistic education. Looking at Shaver's tendentious, tiny shirts, I get a vicarious kick of discovery.

If you tossed these five artists in a Cuisinart and punched "Blend," would you pour out a Gober? No, but the resulting gunk might—upon analysis—yield reliable statistics on the nutritional content of a Gober. I wish exhibitions like this happened more often. In considering any superior artist, we wonder how he or she got that way; but it is the nature of first-rate talents to subsume influences while covering their tracks. Asking artists about such matters rarely helps. Most artists are no good at telling. Artists show. Today we crave what they can reveal about one another. Gober's curatorship speaks to Baudelaire's definition of good criticism: that it be "partial, passionate, and political." ♦

Gober's show at the Matthew Marks Gallery. Left to right: Semmel's "Touch," Noland's "Stand-In for a Stand-In," and a Beck video.

THE CURRENT CINEMA

CROSSING THE LINE

Shooting Super-8 in "West Beirut."

BY ANTHONY LANE

THERE is no disguising the fact that "West Beirut" is all about West Beirut. Either you have the guts to see a movie set in Lebanon in 1975 or you don't. To those who give it a chance, Ziad Doueiri's first feature should prove anything but a chore; it may even seem familiar—closer to the easygoing Baltimore pictures of Barry Levinson, say, than to some of the more chastening rigors of recent Arab cinema. Like Levinson, Doueiri realizes that if you make a film local enough the air of authenticity will be contagious, and the audience will end up feeling nostalgic for a place they never knew.

Molotov cocktails and cigarettes: teen-agers ad-lib their way through a divided city.

To point out that 1975 was not the quietest year in Lebanese history isn't saying a lot; the strangely calmative lesson of "West Beirut" is that, in some ways, 1975 was pretty much the same wherever you went. The story starts with a playground full of schoolchildren watching a dogfight between Israeli and Syrian jets overhead; at ground level, however, the kids are wearing floral shirts with Huggy Bear collars, and our hero, a teen-ager named Tarek (Rami Doueiri), wears jeans so flared that he appears to be travelling on a pair of small hovercraft. At one point, he goes to see his friend Omar (Mohamad Chamas); they smoke cigarettes in the bedroom, put on a record, and begin to dance. For a minute, I thought, Ah, yes, here we go: an ancient Arab litheness, peculiar to the rhythms of the region and requiring skills that will forever be impenetrable to the Western soul. Then I caught the tune on the turntable: "Rock Your Baby."

It is this dogfight between the known and the distant, between the consoling and the perilous, that gives Doueiri's film its snap. Tarek's last name is Noueiri, one letter away from his creator's, and he is played by the director's younger brother, so it would not be presumptuous to view this as an exercise in autobiography—a stack of things past, shuffled and dealt anew. Certainly there is a fierce warmth in the portrait of Tarek's parents—Hala (Carmen Lebbos) and her languorous husband, Riad (Joseph Bou Nassar). Rites-of-passage movies tend to freeze the parents out or knock them down, but here they set all the right examples, even the sexual ones; she is crisp and bobbed, he is baggy-eyed and bent over a book, and they can hardly keep their hands off each other. Their test is to stick together while Beirut rips itself apart. Roadblocks go up between the Christian-controlled East and the Western sector patrolled by Muslim militias. "There is no Beirut, today it's East and West," says a guard at the crossing point, and this division shuts down the livelihoods of Riad and Hala. She can't practice law and he can't farm, although, being Riad, he promises that the country they love will stay inviolate. "I'll prove it to you," he says, and, like a paramour in a poem, brings her strawberries in bed.

As far as Tarek is concerned, if this is the end of society he can't get enough of it. The whole trajectory of the film is touched off by the sly, demonic grin that appears when he first gathers that war means no more school. Most of what follows counts as free time; the best scenes come early on, and they jolt along with a roughness that verges on the haphazard. Beirut-watchers may be reminded of "Circle of Deceit," Volker Schlöndorff's devastated love story, which he was crazy enough to film in the city in 1980, while the war was still going on. "West Beirut" is a lighter enterprise, but it's equally tricky to predict; although neither Doueiri nor his actors are improvising, the characters themselves, with the ricochet of luck and bad luck whining around them, seem forced to ad-lib their existence. One moment Tarek is staring up at a girl on a balcony, and the next he is strolling beside her as if the pickup itself were too slight to mention. Her name is May (Rola Al Amin), and she is a Christian; that alone makes you think of another balcony, in Verona, and of other young lovers stuck in the wrong tribes on the wrong side of town.

Such plot as there is concerns some home-movie footage shot by Tarek and Omar on Super-8; thankfully, Doueiri soft-pedals any hint of youthful creativity, preferring to stress the practical challenge of getting film developed during a civil war. The shop with the Kodak sign lies just beyond a checkpoint, and the boys, with May in tow, approach it with trepidation. Omar—small and gnomish, with a slippery wisdom beyond his years—takes hold of the crucifix around May's neck and tucks it under her sweater. It's a smart move, for within seconds they are lined up at gunpoint and accused of being Christian spies, and it takes much bowing and scraping on Omar's part, together with a peace offering of cigarettes, to pluck them out of trouble. "West Beirut" is a slender picture, and it scrapes against the sentimental, but scenes like that are amazingly adroit in their negotiation of mood; although Lebanon has been culturally colonized by France since the nineteen-twenties (and Doueiri duly supplies a very funny lampoon of French hauteur in Tarek's class at school), there remains the ironic likelihood that French cinema, more than any other, has shaped his style. It is men like Renoir and Truffaut, after all, who saw how accurately movies could measure changes in the wind, and how quickly the farcical could turn foul.

That is what happens at the rally. For fun, Tarek and Omar join a street demonstration and merrily chant the name of Kamal. "Who's Kamal?" asks Tarek. "No idea," Omar says with a shrug. In a flash—literally so, as a Molotov cocktail flares in front of them—the fun stops dead, and the two friends are separated. Tarek hides in a car, which, to his horror, passes the Kodak shop and heads for the forbidden territory of the East. Once there, he escapes and finds himself in an apartment stacked with guns. A lark has turned into a frenzy, which turns into a lark of a darker variety, and so on; suffice to say the switchback does not end there. The unforced surrealism of Beirut's plight keeps spewing images as if they were gags; we have much to learn, for instance, from the philosophical gentleman who runs errands for a brothel madam, and who thus passes unscathed across a sniper's alley with a bright-red bra tied to his car aerial. "If they see the bra," he says, "you live."

You could argue that such comedy is irresponsible, or, at any rate, morally frivolous. In April, 1975, Shimon Peres, then the Israeli Defense Minister, was asked how Israel would respond to the landing of P.L.O. terrorists on the beaches of Tel Aviv: "We shall allow Lebanese internecine strife to retaliate for us," he said, and his prophetic confidence was amply repaid. In the same month, members of the Phalange, the paramilitary wing of the Maronite Christians, shot thirty-one civilians, mostly Muslim, on a bus in East Beirut. The ensuing fifteen months saw the death of thirty thousand people in Lebanon, seventy per cent of them under the age of twenty. Twenty-five thousand children were orphaned. Kamal Jumblatt, to whom Tarek and Omar so kindly lend their support, was the leader of the left-of-center National Movement; he was murdered, by persons unknown, in March, 1977. How can you put a backdrop as stained as that behind a drama whose most heartfelt sequence involves a lanky youth trying to focus a cheap camera on the cleavage of his best friend's aunt, while the friend murmurs, "What a piece of lamb"?

The only answer must be: This is what it was like. Not everyone was caught in the blast; even in Lebanon, history is something that passes by, rattling the windows, and you simply have to pray that you're not at home when it finally breaks in. Only a few artists, of Tolstoyan omniscience, can meet the grand events head on; the rest must throw sidelong glances and hope for scraps. "West Beirut" is instructive in this regard; Doueiri does begin in high style, with the Phalangist attack on the bus, and it's the worst thing in the film. Blood bursts, an old woman tumbles in slow motion, and a soprano laments lustily on the soundtrack; everything about the scene looks false and puffy, and Doueiri takes the rest of the movie to reëstablish his credentials as a director of dexterity and wit. What stays with you from "West Beirut," in short, is not its immersion in political complexity but its homage to half-knowledge—to the state of randy innocence in which Tarek and Omar are suspended, and which saves them from the maturity of despair. When Omar warns that godless foreign pleasures will be frowned upon by the new fundamentalism, Tarek is appalled. "Is Paul Anka the work of Satan?" he asks.

Maybe it was the same spirit of curiosity that sent his alter ego, Doueiri, from Lebanon to the United States, where he wound up as a cameraman on "Reservoir Dogs," "Pulp Fiction," and "Jackie Brown" before turning, or returning, to "West Beirut." From mass slaughter to Quentin Tarantino: I'm not sure that counts as progress, but Doueiri's movie, honestly tremulous in the face of guns and girls, is a rousing introduction to pulp fact. ♦

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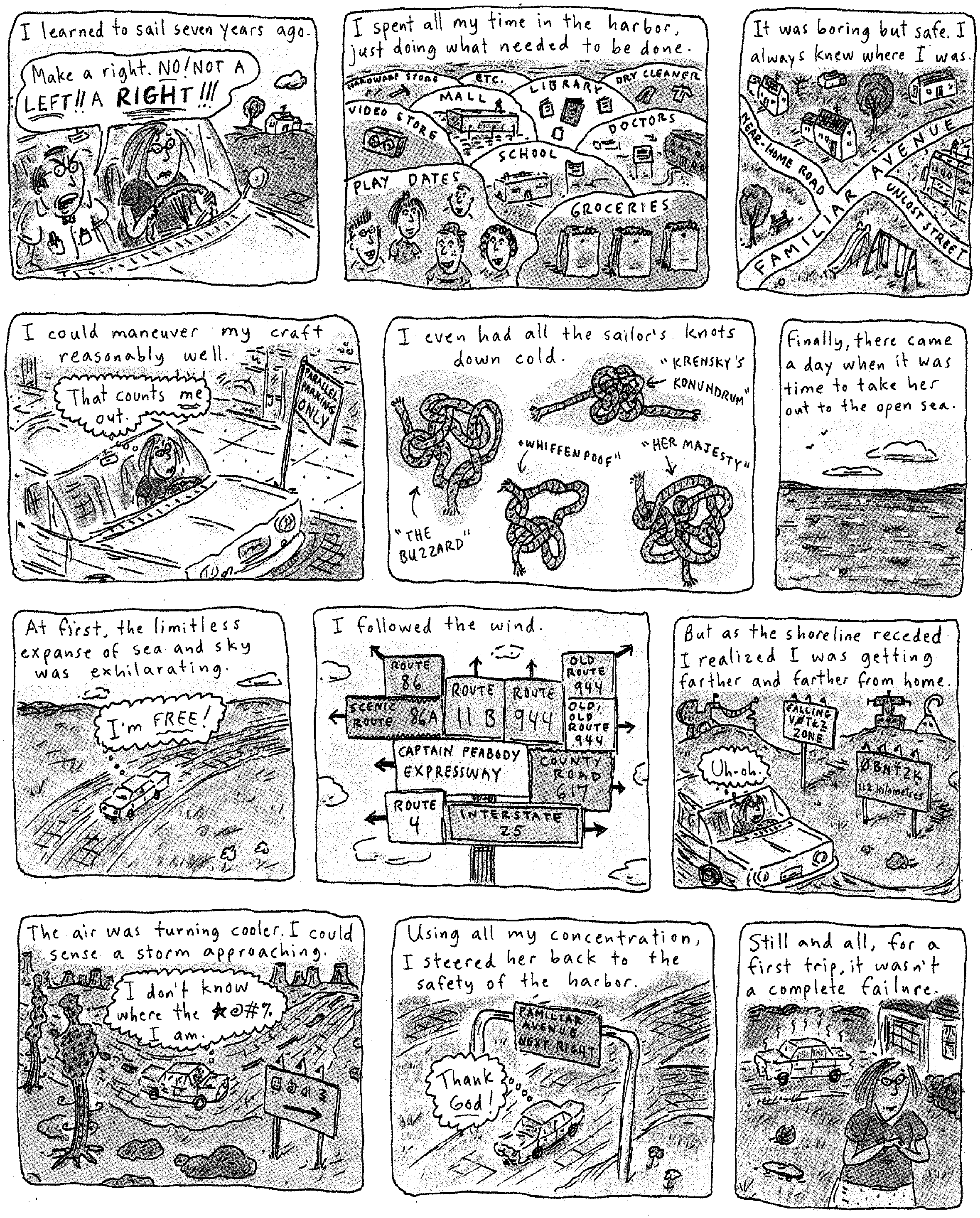
THE BACK PAGE BY ROZ CHAST

UNCHARTED WATERS


I learned to sail seven years ago.
Make a right. NO! NOT A LEFT!! A RIGHT!!!
I spent all my time in the harbor, just doing what needed to be done.
HARDWARE STORE
ETC.
LIBRARY
DRY CLEANER
MALL
VIDEO STORE
DOCTORS
SCHOOL
PLAY DATES
GROCERIES
It was boring but safe. I always knew where I was.
NEAR-HOME ROAD
FAMILIAR AVENUE
UNLOST STREET
I could maneuver my craft reasonably well.
That counts me out.
PARALLEL PARKING ONLY
I even had all the sailor's knots down cold.
"KRENSKY'S KONUNDRUM"
"WHIFFENPOOF"
"HER MAJESTY"
"THE BUZZARD"
Finally, there came a day when it was time to take her out to the open sea.
At first, the limitless expanse of sea and sky was exhilarating.
I'm FREE!
I followed the wind.
ROUTE 86
ROUTE 11 B
ROUTE 944
OLD ROUTE 944
SCENIC ROUTE 86A
OLD, OLD ROUTE 944
CAPTAIN PEABODY EXPRESSWAY
COUNTY ROAD 617
ROUTE 4
INTERSTATE 25
But as the shoreline receded I realized I was getting farther and farther from home.
Uh-oh.
FALLING VØTEZ ZONE
ØBNŤZK 112 kilometres
The air was turning cooler. I could sense a storm approaching.
I don't know where the ★@#%, I am.
Using all my concentration, I steered her back to the safety of the harbor.
FAMILIAR AVENUE NEXT RIGHT
Thank God!
Still and all, for a first trip, it wasn't a complete failure.

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